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THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER BY MRS. GORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



THE
DEAN'S DAUGHTER;

OR,
THE DAYS WE LIVE IN.

BY MRS. GORE.

"Thus we play the fools with the time; and the spirits of the
wise sit in the clouds and mock us." — SHAKESPEARE.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1853.

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THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

Quel triste métier, de chanter les combats
Et les peines du cœur, à ceux qui n'en ont pas.

LE VAVASSEUR.

DURSLEY PARK enjoyed that year the unusual honour of receiving Sir Thomas and Lady Hargreave at the close of the London season; Oak Hill, and the Nautilus schooner moored under its shrubberies, being the honeymoon appanage of the Clitheroes. The pine-tree bench which had witnessed the brotherly confidences of Dick and William, was now the retreat of far more practical persons; a bride and bridegroom whose talk was of railway shares and foreign securities; and whose billet-doux might have been interchanged by the electric telegraph with perfect propriety. Even before the altar, their pulses had not quickened by a throb.

Still graver, however, if possible, was the courtship now proceeding at Dursley. As if in revenge upon the girlish vanities which had profited her so

little, Lady Hargreave's daughters had taken up their vocation of worldly wisdom as strenuously as converts embrace a new religion. Julia was now as serious, or as *she* called it, as rational, as Emma had become mercenary and calculating; and there was already in the sisters the making of two as disagreeable women as ever deadened the cheerfulness of social life.

The wedding of the future Lady Arthur, was arranged on a still grander scale of magnificence than that of her sister. The vain-glorious family was ambitious of meeting the Irish Marquisate, on something of an equal footing; and they consequently persuaded the Fitzmortons and Delaviles to grace the ceremony with their presence. These aristocratic pre-eminences, who predominated like Ossa and Pelion in the county, entertaining a system of signals between themselves, incomprehensible to the vulgar, had long agreed that, though it was impossible to know anything of the Hargreaves in London beyond an exchange of visiting cards, they were people to be noticed in the country: substantial clients in public subscriptions and private charities, whenever a flood or fire or epidemic taxed the humanity of the county. Even if taken in the fact of dining with them, or giving them dinners, country neighbourhood is an admitted plea for condescension with the stiffest-backed of the "old nobility," sung by one of their caste, now wise enough to prefer reason to rhyme.

It was August, too — the November of country-house life; — when, as there is nothing to be killed in the fields, they lose their charm to eyes polite; and so the stately inhabitants of Delavile Abbey and Morton Castle agreed to spend a gaudy day at Dursley Park. The Hargreaves, — whose dry champagne was unimpeachable, and who, when they wanted a little music, thought it worth while, with right regal or right parvenu magnificence, to secure Thalberg, Grisi, and Mario, — were people better worth knowing than such antediluvians as the Brampton Brylls, of Bryllholm Place, unable to contribute a cheese-paring, or a tune on the spinnet, to the entertainment of their neighbours.

“The Hargreaves are getting on amazingly,” was Lady Delavile’s observation to her lord, after perusing the letter announcing the approaching marriage of their daughter with the Bishop of Rosstrevor. “A younger son of the late Lord Castle-Glynnon, if I mistake not. An immense match for the granddaughter of a factory-man (something of that kind — was not Sir Thomas Hargreave’s father, my dear Lord Delavile?) But they really deserve it. More civil, painstaking, obliging people I never met. And on the right side, too. Young Hargreave, I suppose, will come into Parliament at the next election — to say nothing of that rich railway son-in-law. — Three votes! — Yes, my dear Delavile, we had better go to this wedding.

There is nothing stirring here-about just now. It will be a change to help us through the week; and there will not be a soul one knows to make a history of our being present."

There *was* a guest, however, at Dursley Park, to make histories concerning both present and absent. Barty Tomlinson, the smell-feast, who had contrived to extort an invitation, whispered to Lady Fitzmorton, very few minutes after her arrival, "I am sure, dear Lady F—, I know what brings you hither — though you *look* as if brought to the house in custody of the Black Rod. My friend Fitz has written to you from Pera, or Smyrna, to beg an account of the wedding for the benefit of Herbert Fanshawe; who proposed last year, and was refused, in succession, by every female under the roof of Dursley — from the maiden aunt in linsey-woolsey, to the *dame de compagnie*, in brocade. Ha! here are the Delaviles, too, with their duodecimo postillions. *They* are come here only to see whether there is any chance of coaxing over the vote of the new member for R—. What a charming parliamentary agent spoiled, when Heaven made that woman a peeress! Good morning, Lady Delavile. Anything new in last night's Standard? — I am told a Cabinet is called for Thursday next. Rather unusual at this season."

Lady Delavile, who entertained a sovereign disgust for the presumptuous little *pique-assiette*, contemplated

him with the same air of wonder she might have surveyed a mite or aphid through a microscope, and made no sort of answer. But no sooner had she swept on towards Lady Hargreave and her daughters, than he exclaimed in a half-aside tone to Lady Fitzmorton, (a timid woman, too shy to silence his impertinence,) "an excellent person, poor dear Lady Delavile. For whom, or what, is she in mourning? Her complexion, perhaps, which is decidedly gone. She consoles herself for the loss, by the pretension of becoming a *femme politique*; as if it followed that, because you are too old for a beauty, you are just old enough for a *bel-esprit*. I am afraid it is *nullus in vobis*! Lady Delavile may have lost her molars, but she has not cut her wisdom-teeth."

Unmitigated, even by the excellence of the wedding cheer, was the venom of the little chatterbox. After insulting every member of the Hargreave family by expressions of surprise at their having "got" Lady Fitzmorton and the Delaviles, and then, suddenly recollecting that it was August, and nothing going on, he hit upon a new raw — the absence of the heir of Dursley. — "What was his friend Dick about, that he did not attend his sister's wedding? — Most extraordinary! Dick expressly told him in Berkeley Square, in July, that they should meet at Dursley the following month. What could possibly have altered his intention?"

Every member of the family, though forewarned

against his cross-questioning, was pumped out of some trifling hint of the information he wanted to obtain; till, by degrees, his notes and queries had elicited that there was a split in the family cabinet; and that Mr. Hargreave was absent without leave.

"I wonder my friend Dick had courage to absent himself from so grand a family festivity," said he, to Mrs. Brampton Brills, on the wedding morning, having decoyed her into the new conservatory, on pretence of showing her the *Victoria Regia* in flower.

"Courage? Cowardice you mean!" responded the congenial spirit of the embittered old lady. "Mr. Hargreave dares not face his father and mother. He is staying in the North with the vulgar old aunt to whom Sir Thomas pays an annuity never to speak to them in public.

"Banished? For what crime?" rejoined Sir Benjamin Backbite. "Has Dick been flirting or playing? — Is he in love, or in debt? — Or has he seceded from the family politics or religion, which people do now-a-days, as unblushingly as they dye their hair," continued he, fixing an inquisitorial stare upon Mrs. Brampton Brills' capillary parting, bearing manifest traces of Melacomia.

"He simply wants to marry the daughter of the Dean of R—, who died last year over head and ears in debt," she replied, tamed down as by the glance of a Van Amburgh.

"I recollect! — His bankruptcy made nearly as much noise in the country as that of the Prince de Guéménée, at Paris, before the first revolution; of which, they say, it laid the foundation stone."

"Well! Dean Mordaunt's is beginning to revolutionise Dursley Park. Sir Thomas promoted the match with Miss Mordaunt with all his soul and with all his strength, till he found that she was a beggar. But the Dean unluckily died before he succeeded to his brother's title and estate. As if a Mordaunt in rags, were not a match for the granddaughter of a Manchester cotton-spinner!"

"Not much to choose between the cobwebs of a ruined house and the flue of a thriving factory, I admit," retorted Barty, aspidly. "But what attitude has Dick taken in the family storm? — That of Ajax bullying the elements?" —

"I understand he is bent on following up his imprudent engagement to Miss Mordaunt. And if Lady Arthur O'Brennan should have a son, nothing would surprise me less than to find Sir Thomas disinherit *his*, and adopt his grandson."

"Provided he took the glorious name of Hargreave. Ha! ha! ha! New people, like eels, adhere to their native mud. But Dick could not marry without his father's assistance."

"The wealthy aunt, it seems, has undertaken a dowry for Miss Mordaunt; and among them, they have

established her needy brother in business or an office, or something or other that gives him a coat to his back."

"God bless my soul! I had not heard a word of this! How fortunate are the Hargreaves, my dear Mrs. Brampton Brylls, in having at their gates so candid a biographer. Since Moore's Life of Sheridan, and Croker's Sketch of Hook, never was friend so impartially dealt with!"

The post of that day conveyed, of course, to the three or four great people, to whom it was the mission of Barty Tomlinson to purvey gossip, graphic sketches of the wedding of the R. R. Lord Arthur the Taciturn; as well as of Dick Hargreave, the millionaire, sharing like St. Martin, his cloak with a beggar.

And from a train thus laid, what ramifications of scandal and mischief!

But was Richard Hargreave really so happy as to have incurred any risk of disinheritance? Alas! on his arrival at Bardsey Tower, a fortnight after William Mordaunt's acceptance of the place procured for him, he had been welcomed by Margaret with such friendly and sisterly ease as drove him to despair. He saw at once by her manner that he was adopted as William's benefactor, as the favourite nephew of her own benefactress; but that, as far as love was concerned, she would sooner have given her affections to Nero!

How he wished there had been the slightest awk-

wardness in her manner of receiving him! How he wished she had shrunk from sauntering with him in the coppice, or beside the stream which now ran crystal and weedless! She might have been married for the last half-dozen years to the parson of the parish, for any fear she seemed to entertain of being again solicited to become his wife. Margaret evidently considered herself sheltered from importunate solicitation, under the safeguard of her great obligations.

Deep was his mortification! He had hoped that complete estrangement from the fickle object of her preference, and above all that the influence of his partial aunt, would have effected something in his favour. And so they had. But the state of feeling thus induced, was precisely the calm security so obnoxious to a lover.

When the first flurry of vexation was exhausted, he began to quarrel with himself rather than with Margaret; and rescinded his rash resolve of instant departure. To leave Bardsel when it was looking so beautiful — to quit Margaret when *she* was not only looking so beautiful, but speaking so kindly, would have been the captiousness of a child. No! he would remain and content himself with the cheerful flow of her conversation, the intelligence of her open countenance; how different from the studied flippancy and artificial smiles of the patent angels which spread their gauzy wings in Belgravia!

"I should be an idiot to refuse myself the pleasure of living under the same roof with her, because she does not choose to be called Mrs. Hargreave," said he.

And when, a fortnight afterwards, Sir Thomas, on finding that Margaret and his son were inmates of Bardsel Tower, addressed him one of those arbitrary letters which render parental rule insupportable — commanding him to appear at Dursley Park on a certain day as if subpoenaed by the Court of Chancery, — Richard, who had always intended to be present at his sister's wedding, replied that it was not at present his intention to travel southwards.

More letters followed. But of what nature, it would be difficult to say. For they were addressed by Sir Thomas to his sister Martha; who, when she thought proper, could be as close as one of Sir Hurst Clitheroe's deed-chests — *chef-d'œuvres* from the furnace of Chubb. Their effect was visible only in increased tenderness towards Margaret, and an evident determination to leave the young couple to themselves.

"My brother is going blind," was the spinster's argument with herself. "My brother has had gold-dust thrown in his eyes, and no longer discerns black from white. To make his son settle down into a happy man and useful member of society, there wants only a gentle companionable wife, like Margaret Mor-

daunt. And, for my part, I would rather see the family heirless, than find my nephew degenerate into a make-believe man of fashion, married to a ladyship, and selling his conscience to ministers for a riband or a place."

She refrained, therefore, from further communication with Dursley Park. "They will be too busy with their bride-cake and favours to take heed of my silence," muttered she. "And if my nephew and Margaret choose to walk quietly to church some morning, without leave but not without license, I must stop the gap in my brother's temper with gold-leaf; and give shelter to the young couple till the storm blows over."

The more Dick Hargreave complained of Margaret's indifference, the more satisfied was Aunt Martha that the snows were gradually dissolving, and that, as on the Swiss mountains, flowers would suddenly appear underneath.

Not a little surprised, meanwhile, was Dick Hargreave to find the delicate elegant Margaret established as a first favourite with his rough cousin Ebenezer — a frequent guest at Bardsel. At first, he attributed this singular friendship to the fact asserted in Champfort's axiom, "*qu'on s'attache par ses bienfaits*;" the sister of William Mordaunt of Somerset House, being necessarily an object of interest to the Downing Street Deputationist. But he soon learned to ascribe

it to the sympathy spontaneous between honest minds and feeling hearts.

The old cotton-spinner and Margaret liked each other at first sight, because "like loves like;" — albeit, as poor Hood sings —

There 's far from coats of frieze
To silk and satin gowns.

But if as much pleased as surprised to find the lady of his love a frequent visitor at Hargreen Factory — curious to observe, fond to admire, and storing her mind with new experiences, — he would rather his cousin Ralph had been less strikingly handsome, and less remarkably agreeable. Ralph Hargreave was a fine specimen of the educated manufacturer; enlightened by foreign travel and acute observation. His father had sent him to the four quarters of the globe, in quest of information connected with, and connections profitable to, their business; and Ralph had brought home, in addition, as much useful knowledge as converted him into one of the pleasantest companions in the world. Ralph Hargreave was light in hand as a barb; devoid equally of levity and pedantry. He not only knew most things, but when to keep them to himself.

His cousin Dick had long recognized his merits; and one of the many sources of gratification connected with his visits to Bardsel, was good neighbourship

with his manly, rational kinsman. Ralph was ten years his senior; old enough to know his own superiority of mind, and too old to be anxious about parading it. But that Miss Mordaunt's visit to Aunt Martha had been embellished by such an addition to their society, was not reassuring. Ralph was far too good to look at, and to listen to, for his London-taught kinsman to feel satisfied at the extreme intimacy existing between the stalwart cotton-spinner and Nero; as though the man and beast were in habits of daily intercourse.

"As if Dean Mordaunt's daughter would stoop to become Mrs. Hargreave of Hargreen," muttered he, when, on a glowing First of September, he was returning with his dog and gun from the stubbles, after noticing the young couple sauntering together at a distance among the straggling thickets of the cop-pice. "Yet after all, one Hargreave is as good as another; and no one can say how many hundreds of thousands the old man has laid up for his son. Ebenezer's peculiar opinions have kept his branch of the family from springing upwards; but when he is gone, Ralph will emerge from obscurity, and shine in the world."

Ralph appeared to him, in short, a dangerous rival. There was between them much congeniality: the same honest nature, the same frank countenance. But Ralph was the upright, sturdy pine tree springing on the

mountain side; and Richard the same tree, planted on a cultivated lawn; pruned here and thinned out there, to afford vistas for the views of the proprietor; stunted and cankered therefore, compared with his cousin.

Conscious of inferiority, never was the shy suitor seen to less advantage than in Ralph Hargreave's presence. Ralph seemed to have usurped his place by the hearth, Ralph seemed to be gradually intercepting his influence over his aunt. How if he should end by appropriating to himself that greater blessing, for which the son of Sir Thomas Hargreave would thankfully have exchanged his birthright?

In compliance with Aunt Martha's excellent counsel that she should leave no moment unoccupied to favour the intrusion of unavailing grief, Margaret had exercised throughout the summer her talent for sketching from nature, which the beautiful scenery around Bardsel was well calculated to stimulate. And what more natural than that Ralph Hargreave, who knew every "dingle and bosky bourne," within ten miles of the Tower, — every beck and tarn, every crag and ravine, — should be accepted by the young artist as a guide. He carried in his hand her campstool and colour box, while Nero carried in his mouth her parasol, or Ralph Hargreave's walking-stick. — And when Richard, soon after his arrival, added himself uninvited to the party, it was somewhat trying to perceive that his intrusion was all but unnoticed. It is true that, with his cigar

between his lips, he did little to enhance the colloquial enjoyments of the party: for Dick was one of those who, either from shyness or lack of animal spirits, fancy themselves born exempt from the duty of taking part in social intercourse; as satisfied to accept the part of audience, as your Fanshawes and Tomlinsons to figure on the stage. He listened, therefore, while Ralph rattled pleasantly on; mingling with his instructive dissertations on the changes of light and shade, and varieties of tint and vegetation, which created Claudes, and Hobbimas, Salvators and Ruysdaels, in the scenery through which they were rambling, anecdotes of foreign travel, and criticisms on contemporary artists. Dick Hargreave felt, once or twice, that he could have killed him for the interest with which Margaret attended to his lucubrations.

Of course — for he was a lover, and as a lover deaf and blind — of course, Dick Hargreave never surmised the origin of this well-established intimacy; namely that, early in that very summer, Ralph Hargreave had performed quarantine with Lord Fitzmorton and his travelling companion, at Trieste; and that he was consequently the last person of her acquaintance who had exchanged spoken words with Herbert Fanshawe. But of this, poor Dick knew nothing.

As they made their way over rustic bridges or under spreading elms, inhaling the pungent fragrance

of the woods, and hailing the inaugural song of the robins among the crisp holly, poor Richard was

Gathering sweet pain
About his fancy, till it thrilled again.

A brilliant French writer has said that every man contains within himself the ashes of a poet, dead in early youth. Most of us, even the least sentimental, have in their hearts a mortuary chamber, into which they retreat at will; an Elysium haunted by the shade of their first love; an Elysium whose fruits and flowers exhibit perpetual spring, albeit the realities of life, with sear and withered leaves or naked branches, have created winter elsewhere.

One day, when Aunt Martha had joined the sketching party, to marshal her young friends to a charming spot, near the source of the stream, where the water, yellow with the secretions of the neighbouring moor, gushed like liquid topaz over rocks over-shadowed by spreading alders, — Dick Hargreave, irritated by the fluency of his cousin, suddenly exclaimed:

“What a pity, Ralph, that we can’t change fathers and fortunes! You ought to be in Parliament. If ever man had the gift of the gab and *la langue bien pendue*, it is you.”

A hearty laugh responded to this sudden burst of uncomplimentary compliment.

“What put this crotchet into your head, just now,

my dear Dick?" said he, when the gravity of the party was restored.

"Because I had a letter from Dursley Park this morning; insisting on my standing for some confounded Irish borough, to which the O'Brennan family have the nomination. My father seems to have purchased it for the express purpose of annoying me."

"But why should it annoy you? Why not go into Parliament, and be as prosy and contradictory as your neighbours? I dare say the vein is in you, if you would only work it. Do not give Miss Mordaunt reason to suppose me the only word-mill in the family!"

Margaret, who was establishing her campstool under Aunt Martha's instructions, was silent, taking little heed of the sumpter mules who had conveyed her artistic baggage.

"My father's aversion to parliament is perfectly comprehensible," said Ralph, resuming what Dick Hargreave considered his preaching. "A strong-headed, strong-hearted, but uneducated man, parliament is not his place. He does six times as much good, here; where his Lancashire dialect does not weaken the authority of his masterly judgment and practical knowledge."

"I was not speaking of your father; I spoke of yourself," said Dick, almost peevishly.

"Of myself, then. I am as little fitted as he is,
The Dean's Daughter. II.

for a place in our legislative assembly, as at present constituted. In the first place, I am a Dissenter. In the next, though endowed with an excellent education, by a provincial grammar-school and St. Bees, (completed by ten years' trituration between the great milestones of travel and study), I am wholly untaught in that great conventional school of polite life, which, laugh as you please, is by no means wanting in lessons of wisdom. In parliament, Dick, I should appear as great a savage as the Indian youth in Wordsworth's Ruth. And why dishonour the championship of the great principles I should endeavour to advocate, by failing in trivialities wherein every donkey has the advantage over me? I should speak when it was my business to be silent; remain stunned by disgust when eloquence became a duty. I am a mere man of the woods, Dick; a creature of impulse; a great orator in my own parish; but totally unfit to fight in those courtly campaigns, whose trenches are opened by 'four-and-twenty fiddlers all of a row,' with a bow to the opposite faction, and *à vous Messieurs le feu!*"

"And why, pray, should you suppose *me* more subordinate than yourself?"

"Because you are to the manner born; because you are to the manner *bred*. From young Fanshawe, I heard a great deal of your Dursley tactics. From yourself, I have learned a great deal more. I do not hesitate to say that you are the man wanted to ré-

present, at some future time, the interests of our class, and the credit of our family: — two things never contemplated by the parliaments of the House of Stuart.”

Ralph could hardly refrain from a smile at the *renfrogné* air with which his cousin stood listening against the trunk of a beech tree, puffing his cigar in supreme disgust.

“I don’t despair, Dick,” he continued, “of seeing you, fifteen or twenty years hence, a portly Sir Richard Hargreave, or perhaps Lord Hargreave of Dursley; supporting the existing government, and corresponding on Poor Laws, Emigration, or whatever may be the crack topic of the day, with your country cousin, Squire Ralph, of Hargreen; presenting the kind regards of your beautiful Lady Hargreave,” (here he glanced over his shoulder at Margaret, who was busy with her pencil some twenty yards in their rear), “to my simple-minded Yankee wife; who will be making pumpkin-pies at our factory in the county Palatine.”

With a sudden start, Richard threw into the stream his half-finished cigar.

“You don’t mean that you think of marrying an American?” cried he.

“My dear fellow, I have long thought of nothing else. Virginia and I have been engaged these six years; and were you as firm and consistent with your father as I have been with mine, (who, in the onset, started quite as violently as you did just now at the

notion of a Transatlantic daughter-in-law), you would soon command Sir Thomas's consent to your marriage with Miss Mordaunt."

Dick Hargreave was speechless from surprise. How superfluously had he tormented himself! His cousin Ralph an engaged man, advocating his marriage with Margaret! Mechanically, he stretched forth his hand to the man he had so sincerely detested a quarter of an hour before; and it needed all the influence of that conventional schooling recently alluded to by Ralph, to prevent him from indulging in the expansive action of a German comedy, and folding him to his heart.

"And you really advise me," said he, in the tone of a man who has had a load of paving-stones removed from his heart, "to propitiate my father by accepting this seat of his; and then, firmly adhering to my intentions concerning a settlement in life?"

"Precisely. Become an M. P., and leave the rest to fate. In these times, parliamentary duties are not so very laborious. Half the business of the state is transacted in clubs, and at cabinet dinners: — the other half by the great letters of the press. I would undertake to make a capital member out of Nero, by teaching him to bark his ayes and noes with a discretion calculated to put to shame the howlings of the Irish brigade."

"I am afraid, indeed, that my best chance of a reconciliation with my father lies in capitulation," said

Richard Hargreave, musingly. "Thanks for your advice, Ralph. I sincerely thank you. But after all," continued he, suddenly shrugging his shoulders, "even if I obtained his sanction to my projects, what chance have I with the person for whom I should thus sacrifice my tastes and inclinations? — What chance have I with *her*?" —

"Every chance, if you keep a cigar out of your mouth, and give yourself some little trouble to interest her feelings. As my father said to me last night: 'The garrison is asleep, Ralph; the fortress is off its guard. Why don't that young fellow up with his scaling-ladder, and carry it by a surprise?' My dear Dick, you young gentlemen of England, who live at home at too much ease, seem to think that elections and ladies' hearts are to be won by a wishing-cap! What have you done, pray, since you came to Bardsel, by way of captivating this charming girl, except to gaze at her, like Master Slender at Anne Page; admiring the variable lights on the folds of her gown, or the lustre of the brightest eyes in the world — saving always those of my Virginia."

Richard Hargreave pleaded guilty. But the sage advice of his kinsman was not lost upon him. Before the noon of a new day, he was gone; — gone to propitiate the displeasure of his father, gone to atone for past offences. It had been suggested by his cousin that he should "*reculer pour mieux sauter*."

What he had said or done in the interim to soften the obduracy of Margaret Mordaunt, was a secret between them and the walls of the breakfast-parlour, where they parted. The last words of Aunt Martha, as he bade her a flurried adieu, were: "At Christmas then — at Christmas, my dear Dick, with your friend Mr. Mordaunt. At Christmas for certain. We shall miss you sadly. Your return will be a real holiday at Bardsel."

It has thus been shown that, as the historiographer of the Hargreave dynasty, Barty Tomlinson, had, as usual, outstepped the truth. Till the epoch of Lady Arthur's wedding, Dick had done no more of the deeds imputed to him, than neglect to return to Dursley; while Sir Thomas had said no more than that he would cut him off with a shilling, if he persevered in his intention to marry the daughter of that old scoundrel, the late popular Dean of R — —.

He added, indeed, that his son had far better turn his thoughts to their pretty neighbour at Morton Castle — Lady Emily — the daughter of Lady Fitzmorton, and sister of the Earl; a beautiful girl of eighteen, whose family wished nothing better than to encourage the courtship of the heir of Dursley Park, an estate which marched with their own.

The result of which suggestion was, that Dick Hargreave absented himself from the hymeneals of Emilia with the Bishop of Rosstrevor; affording some

colour to the malefactions of Barty Tomlinson, and enraging his father to a degree into which the temperament of a man so tender of his personal dignity, was little apt to be excited.

Great therefore was the surprise of Sir Thomas, when, after a feud of two months' duration, he beheld his son dissem-fly under the portico of Dursley; as if simply in obedience to his commands.

He was wise enough to welcome home the prodigal without any slaying of calves, or outward demonstration of rejoicing; contenting himself with intimating that the family was on the eve of quitting Dursley for a visit to Sir Hurst and Lady Clitheroe, and placing in his hands a credit to the amount of some thousands of pounds, with the contingent instructions which were to bring him into Parliament, as the honourable member for the free and independent borough of Allenbogue.

Sir Thomas seemed instinctively aware that there is nothing like Parliament, to effect the subjugation of the most rampant human conscience.

CHAPTER II.

What joy have I in June's return,
My feet are parch'd, my eyeballs burn,
I scent no flowery gust;
But faint the flagging zephyr springs
With dry Macadam on its wings,
And turns me "dust to dust."
Where are ye, birds, that blithely wing
From tree to tree, and gaily sing
Or mourn in thicket deep?
My cuckoo has some ware to sell,
The watchman is my Philomel,
My blackbird is a sweep!
Where are ye, linnet, lark, and thrush,
That perch on leafy bough and bush,
And tune the various song?
Two hurdy-gurdists, and a poor
Street Handel grinding at my door
Are all my tuneful throng!

HOOD.

WILLIAM MORDAUNT, meanwhile, was undergoing his inauguration as a denizen of official life. As he surveyed the autumnal aspect of the Thames (slantingly, as Ralph Hargreave's beloved Virginia would have termed it,) from the windows of his new chambers in Somerset House, he bethought him of those former flippant days when he presumed to vilify the turbid waters of that opaque stream, as worthy only of the four rivers of an unwhisperable region.

He now prepared himself to honour the said stream

as a glorious causeway, and the chambers as home, sweet home; — and, after his dreary duties of executorship, those of his new office, were comparatively easy.

He had already settled upon his sister the whole proceeds of the residue of their father's estate, amounting to about a hundred a-year; so as to render her comparatively independent, and leave no further drawback on the zeal with which he set about the study of his new duties.

But duties, the moment they assume that denomination, are apt to bud into thorns instead of roses. The head of William's department was an old gentleman of saturnine aspect; bearing, unblushingly, a stark-naked head which seemed to have worn itself bald by severe labour; who took delight in harassing the newcomer, as one of those empty idle scions of the aristocracy, which, more than once in the course of his official career, had been thrown upon his hands, incompetent to put together the alphabet, or repeat the multiplication table without a blunder. Nor did Mr. Mumpson's singular unsightliness put him greatly in conceit with young Mordaunt's gentlemanly air and pleasant countenance.

"His father was that handsome Dean, so popular at R—, whose estate did not pay three half-pence in the pound," quod Mumpson, a cousin-german once removed of Dean Barnes and Mrs. Pleydell. "I must

look sharp after him. I must teach him that business is business. We know nothing here of bears'-grease and eau de Cologne. If he can't afford to ink his fingers when released from their French kids, I must make the Treasury understand that it is no part of my duties of office to dry-nurse puny dandies."

Very soon, however — much sooner than could have been expected — the good manners and good temper of Mordaunt worked their way with the grumbler. Thanks to his zeal and intelligence, Mumpson found his duties simplified, and the inkstains on his own fingers greatly diminished. The gloomy month of November beheld William incessantly at work; throwing off, by lamplight, the arrears of business accumulated by his predecessor. Mumpson was amazed to find that, instead of growling, according to custom at the extension of his work, the novice cheerfully accepted the labours heaped on his shoulders by the neglect of others.

The consequence was that he became a favourite; and had fairly earned the Christmas holidays which the crusty old gentleman intended to vouchsafe as a concession.

Let any body chained, for the first time, to a distasteful destiny, avouch the delight of closing it on a given day; flinging his over-worked pen into the fire, dismissing his dog's-eared blotting-paper, and saying to himself: "For three weeks to come, old fellow, thou

art thine own master. An hour's over-sleep on a misty morning will not be fatal to thy prospects. Thou mayst read thy newspaper leisurely, not as if a pack of harriers, or Cuban bloodhounds, were hunting thee through those three heterogeneous leaders of the Times, so apt to resemble, in grim distinctiveness of feature, Atropos, Clotho, and Lachesis. Thou mayst eat thy muffin, and sip thy Bohea, without dyspeptic haste. Thou art thine own man. There is respite for thee. There is joy for thee. Go! swallow, at leisure, thy turkey and mince pie, — and be thankful."

For William, indeed, the only home awaiting was one created by a good Samaritan; almost as much delighted at seeing her trap return from the rail with Mordaunt's glowing happy face predominating over the heaped up luggage, as if he had been a son of her own.

What a happy meeting between brother and sister! What a fervent embrace! For they were benefactor and benefited, as well as brother and sister; — parent and child — guardian and pupil. When William hailed his darling Meg, for the first time for a year past divested of mourning attire, happy, healthful, contented, he would willingly have enfolded the stern perpendicular Aunt Martha in an embrace as fond as that he had bestowed on her *protégée*.

At his last visit they had been comparatively strangers; and though grateful even then for her spontaneous kindness to his sister, he had not yet overcome

his repugnance to her looks and manners. For a time, the levity of prosperity clung to him after his downfall. He could not help regarding Aunt Martha, as he had seen her regarded at Dursley Park.

He knew better now. Now, he truly loved the good old soul who found happiness in the happiness of others, and in whose generous nature he recognized the prototype of her nephew. Thanks to Margaret's frequent letters, he was up in the politics of Bardsel; was familiar with the pranks of Nero, and testinensés of Mrs. Rawson. Nay, at the very time that Dick Hargreave was writhing under jealousy of his cousin Ralph, William was prepared for the Bostonian bride to whose admission into the family, his patron at Hargreen had tardily granted his consent.

A happier day was never spent than the one following his arrival. It was fine sparkling Christmas weather. The ground was crisp with frost; the atmosphere crystaline. The winter sun glittered upon the bright-berried hollies, and the white blossoms of the laurustinus. Winter was cheerful as summer; and when Margaret proposed to her brother to walk over to Hargreen, and pay his earliest respects to old Ebenezer, instead of expressing surprise at the amended strength which enabled her to talk of five miles as a trifle, it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world that they should pass the day together, arm in

arm, briskly pacing over the shelving wolds or across shrubby vallies.

Welcomed as they were at the factory, the homely hearty cheer of which afforded a new picture of life to William Mordaunt, he was rejoiced to see the familiar affection lavished by father and son upon the delicate Margaret.

"Miss Mordaunt has been at the pains of teaching us how to make our barn here decent and comfortable for the reception of my wife," said Ralph Hargreave, in explanation of their intimacy. "But for her, we might have given poor Virginia a sorry impression of English civilisation. My father and I entertain very primitive notions of chairs and tables; and are thankful to your sister for having chosen our chintzes, and furnished our book-cases. You must cast your eyes over the set of rooms prepared for my wife. Would to God she were in them, Mr. Mordaunt! I am a famous seaman and dauntless traveller, on my own hook. But to cross the Atlantic twice before I can place poor Virginia in my father's arms, seems to be assigning my happiness to another life."

"Three months hence, if I get leave of absence again at Easter," said William with ready sympathy, "I shall find Mrs. Ralph Hargreave happily established here; criticizing Margaret's chintzes and maplewood."

"Pray Heaven it may be so!" replied Ralph; while

his father exhibited to his fair visitor what he called some "fine thingum-bobs," which his son, who was to sail in a few days from Liverpool, was to convey as a marriage gift to his daughter-in-law. And though Margaret was little versed in the water of the gems before her, she could appreciate the elegance and lightness of the setting: — how different from the family diamonds of Lady Bournemouth — embedded in as much silver as would have formed a moderate soup tureen.

"Pray Heaven it may be so!" repeated Ralph, after surveying the charming group formed by their beautiful guest and the grey-haired ruddy-faced hale old man, who, while he pretended to despise the glittering gauds he was exhibiting, could not conceal his delight at the notion that they would soon adorn the beautiful young woman who was to bear the name of his exemplary son. "But there is one thing, my dear Mr. Mordaunt (forgive my plainness, but circumstances seem to have brought us closer together than ever strangers were brought before), there is one thing wanting to make the Easter visit you promise us, altogether perfect. Why can't you persuade this incomparable sister of your's to be as condescending to Dick Hargreave, as she is to my poor father? Dick is one of a thousand. Dick has a heart of gold. Dick would render his wife happier than almost any woman but your sister (and my Virginia) deserves to be. And

yet, she is as cold to him as if she had been immersed in Wenham Lake."

William Mordaunt replied by a shrug of the shoulders, implying "Don't ask me! Inscrutable are the caprices of womankind."

"As one who feels himself already more than half a married man," continued Ralph, "I have ventured to lecture her, at the risk of being thought impertinent. But I can't for the soul of me, bear to see two human beings cheating themselves out of such happiness as would fall to their united lot."

"I certainly consider them eminently qualified to be happy together," replied William.

"Ay, even should Sir Thomas persist in his opposition," continued Ralph. "For the thunder of Dursley will not prevent our friend at Bardsel (who has more of the fairy godmother in her than any one I ever met with, out of a story-book), to withdraw her good offices. Aunt Martha's house will be their home, as long as they require one; and, at her death, her fortune their inheritance. And my father, let me tell you, who is a sort of Chancellor to her Exchequer, assures me Aunt Martha has not less than eight thousand a-year."

William Mordaunt gave little attention to this financial estimate. He was what Ebenezer Hargreave would have called "dazed." Sir Thomas Hargreave's *opposition*? Opposition to the union of his son with the daughter of Dean Mordaunt? Impossible! Im-

possible, because it was out of all reason; impossible, because the only time William had heard it hinted before, was by the untruthful lips of Barty Tomlinson. He recollected having been stopped one foggy day in London amidst the perils of a crowded crossing, by that benign individual; who, after expressing some surprise that they never met at the Carlton or Coventry, to which clubs he knew that Mordaunt did not belong, inquired in a confidential tone of pretended sympathy whether "Sir Thomas Hargreave was ever likely to give his consent to the marriage of his son with Miss Mordaunt?"

A swerving omnibus and vociferous cad opportunely interposing, prevented William from expressing, in reply, so much as his amazement at the question. But it now recurred to his mind. He did not, however, dwell upon it with much anxiety. Friend and enemy must have been alike misinformed. Fate *could* not have so great a grievance in store for them as that his friend Richard Hargreave should have incurred, on their account, the displeasure of his family.

"I thought you knew it. I beg you ten million of pardons for my abruptness, but I thought you were perfectly aware of Dick's position with his family," said Ralph, in reply to the cross-questions of his guest. "But I understand it all now. Aunt Martha, who has more delicacy in her uncouth frame than the most polished of duchesses, has scrupulously kept even your

sister in the dark. Eager as we all are for the match, she was doubtless afraid of throwing a new difficulty in the way of Miss Mordaunt's acquiescence."

"Being, though half an angel, quite a woman," replied William, "she ought to have understood the advantage of an obstacle! Still, I am incredulous. You would perhaps be equally sceptical, had you seen the court paid to my sister by the whole family at Dursley Park."

"But in that whole family, is there anything real or honest? What frightful marriages have been made by the two daughters! To what a mere puppet has Sir Thomas, possessing all the elements of independence, reduced himself by his paltry ambitions!"

"Still, his uncalled-for assiduities to my family —"

"When rich and prosperous."

"When, as they are now, noble in descent, and unspotted in character!" said Mordaunt, with spirit. He could scarcely be prevailed on to allow his sister time for luncheon, or gratify the pride of his hosts by surveying their preparations for the Boston bride, so eager was he to get back to Bardsel; and, without grieving the feelings of Margaret by a hint upon the subject, ascertain from Aunt Martha the real state of the case.

Never in the course of the spinster's career, had a *tête-à-tête* with her been sought with such eagerness as, that evening, by her young guest. Dame Rawson

would perhaps have been shocked, had she known that Miss Martha and a sightly young gentleman were closeted together a whole hour in her dressing-room.

"What signifies, my dear Sir?" was all he could extract from the venerable spinster. "What on earth signifies whether my brother grants his consent before or after the marriage? — In the interim they can't starve. All I possess is theirs, and shall be settled on my niece Margaret — my daughter Margaret. Moreover, the precious title my brother stoops to be proud of, will, on this occasion, turn to some account; for he will scarcely disinherit the son he can't prevent from becoming Sir Richard Hargreave. 'Hargreave of Dursley Park,' figures, you know, among the families of the Landed Gentry — why or wherefore, it might puzzle the Heralds' college to guess; for our forefathers have been hewers of wood and drawers of water ever since there was a hatchet or bucket in old England. But, once included in the index, no fear that my brother will cause it to be expunged. All I have to ask, therefore, my dear young friend, is that you won't worry my child about this nonsense, which the Hargreen family ought to have had more sense than advert to. Dick will be here in a few days, and explain all. You can't be afraid of a shadow of subterfuge or deception on the part of my nephew!"

Afraid, he certainly was not; but impatient, very. On the day appointed for his friend's arrival, William

insisted on going to meet him at the station, fully resolved to elucidate the case on their way back to Bardsel. But no sooner had he caught sight of Hargreave's face, as he alighted from the railway-carriage, than he felt that an abrupt appeal was out of the question. Dick was evidently not only ill, but unhappy. Months of sickness could scarcely have wrought a greater change, than was perceptible in his usually cheerful countenance. He was looking as thin and careworn as William the preceding winter. They seemed to have exchanged natures.

"Yes — ill enough!" was his curt response to William's inquiries. "Only a feverish cold, however — only a neglected influenza. I shall be well in a day or two, if Aunt Martha and Goody Rawson will take me in hand."

"But something, I am certain, has occurred to annoy you. You are out of spirits as well as out of health."

"Am I? Do I look stupider than usual? The blue devils engendered by blue pill —"

"Nonsense! You never quack yourself, and are a bad dissembler."

"If I dissemble at all, Bill, a friend should respect my deceit. At all events, don't let's talk of disagreeables to-day. There are so few pleasant ones in life, that I can't afford to have my cross of white chalk prematurely rubbed out."

All this was far from satisfactory to William. Still less so when, at the first meeting between Dick Hargreave and Margaret, which was closely watched by her brother, he saw tears rising in those round good-humoured blue eyes, whose honest glances were rarely troubled.

Before a word of explanation was exchanged between William and his friend, he fancied he knew as well what was passing in the mind of Dick Hargreave as if the worst had been told. Sir Thomas had interdicted the marriage; and Richard was come to withdraw his pretensions. Vexatious enough; for, for the first time during their acquaintance, Margaret, as they walked back from Hargreen, had spoken of him with interest — almost with affection. The knowledge that her brother's pecuniary obligations had been discharged, seemed to have removed a barrier from between them. But he might have had deeper cause for regret. Margaret might have *loved* the man cursed with so mercenary a father; and then, what careful hours must have ensued!

Before the close of the following day, sacred to Ralph Hargreave's embarkation for Liverpool, Richard had opened his heart to his friend.

"Speak out, if you love me, dear Dick!" was William's exclamation, on finding that Hargreave was seeking extenuating expressions in which to clothe his explanation. "Are we not brothers? Are we not friends?

Say it, without hesitation. Your father has forbidden you to renew your addresses to Margaret?"

"My father knows me much too well to do anything of the kind," replied Dick Hargreave. "I have a long story to tell. You appear to want patience to listen to it."

"On the contrary," exclaimed William, greatly relieved, "I am prepared to hear every word, every syllable."

"When I arrived at Dursley in October, I found my father, instead of being surly, as I expected, all kindness and good-humour; so much so, that it became twice as difficult to thwart him. The O'Brennan connection seems to have converted the whole family into courtiers. Even my mother, who used to think of nothing but her consoles and damask hangings, has the Irish peerage by heart. My father wanted to hurry me off to Ireland. 'The Bishop wrote urgent letters. The day was fixed for my nomination. I could not go too soon.' I requested leave to explain beforehand my intentions. 'No, the election was the first consideration.' Pledged as my father was to the Marquis, I could not recede. — I went, —"

"Your feats in Ireland let me spare you, my dear Dick. I followed your canvass in the newspapers; and, if you like, can repeat your speech on the hustings."

"Thanks! The first edition will suffice. Well, after the thing was over, the speaking and chairing, and

roaring and drinking, and what was more to the purpose of the O'Brennans, the price of their free and independent borough lodged in the Dublin bank, I could not refuse to spend a day or two with Julia in her palace — (the 'palace' of an Irish Bishop, William, is a thing worth studying); — and I could see, poor, foolish girl, that she had already begun to feel she had paid dearly for the pleasure of being styled Right Honourable. The plague-spot, however, is not yet burnt out. Lady Arthur O'Brennan is as ambitious for me as formerly for herself; and, my father having confided to her his projects about Lady Emily Fitzmorton, she had evidently undertaken to talk me over."

"Till you ended by wishing her as taciturn as my lord the Bishop."

"It was easy not to listen, so long as she was voluble only in praise of Lady Emily, of whom she knows nothing, except that 'she is a person (poor Julia!) of her own rank in life!' But she was not satisfied with making me weary — she must needs make me wretched."

"Wretched?"

"By solemn protestations of knowing for a fact that — but you will be angry —"

"Angry with a woman's idle gossip?"

"That she knew and could prove that the person to whom I was sacrificing all my prospects in life, was under positive engagements to Herbert Fanshawe."

William could not repress a glance of such severe displeasure, that his companion had not courage to expose poor Margaret to further suspicion, by adding that Lady Arthur asserted her to be in correspondence with her favoured lover; some friend of Barty Tomlinson's having seen, at Palermo, a letter addressed to Miss Mordaunt lying openly upon Fanshawe's desk.

"Lady Arthur used to be fond of my poor sister," said William feelingly. "I can make excuses for the opposition of Sir Thomas. I can make none for the slanders of his daughter."

"You suppose them then to be mere slanders?" exclaimed Hargreave. "You do *not* believe that an understanding exists between her and that rascal?" —

"I would stake my right hand to the contrary! — Margaret has no secrets from me. — Margaret's breast is clear as crystal."

"So I have always felt, and so I feel!" cried Hargreave; "and, in consequence of all this, Julia and I parted after unkindlier things said between us than I had ever thought to utter to a sister of mine. But I cannot disguise from you, Bill, that I have never had an easy moment since I left Rosstrevor. Herbert Fanshawe's confounded face haunts me like a vampire's!"

"I will go this moment to Margaret, and obtain from her an explicit denial," said William hastily.

"No, do not harass her. It would be an insult

to her dignity of mind to inform her that she had been unjustly suspected."

"Always the same kind and generous fellow!" —

"To proceed with my story. On arriving at Dursley, I found my father prepared by a letter from Julia ('Lady Arthur,' as he invariably calls her) for my obstinate rebellion. I never saw him so angry, I never heard him so unjust. The heartless marriages of his daughters seem to have satisfied him that wedlock is a business to be transacted, not a happiness to be enjoyed. My long withheld acquiescence in his views about Parliament, seem to have been taken for earnest that I would marry Lady Emily, or do any other disagreeable thing he might propose."

"Sir Thomas, too, I presume, twitted you with my sister's preference for Fanshawe?" —

"No, my father does not seem to have considered the match on its moral side. With him, it is as practical as the balance of his bankers' book. He simply told me that, though I deserved a strait waistcoat, he should do nothing to impede my liberty of action; that I was free to go and marry Miss Mordaunt — I spare you the language in which the permission was couched. But that not a guinea of his fortune should I ever touch, beyond the two thousand a year settled upon me when I went to college."

"Then, of course, all hope of the marriage must be at an end?" exclaimed William.

"I fear so — I greatly fear so! — How could I ask her to share such a pittance, she, of whom all my father's wealth appeared unworthy!"

"I don't mean *that*, Dick. By Jove! you can't suppose I meant *that*. But Margaret would never consent to be the cause of your disinheritance. And just as she was beginning to come round! — She spoke of you yesterday as I never heard her speak before!"

Dick Hargreave's eyes brightened.

"If you really think that she — that her — that I have still the least chance — that these confounded stories of Julia's have no foundation —"

"My dear Hargreave, listen to me," cried Mordaunt. "Your cousin Ralph, who has more sense in his little finger than we in our united noddles, remonstrated with me lately, in the most serious manner, about the way in which you are trifling with your happiness. 'Two young people made for each other,' he says, 'will perhaps mar their allotted destinies, for want of some reasonable being to speak plain English to them, and compel them to act with plain sense.' He insists that even your father might be rendered reasonable, if reasonably dealt with."

"Then, by heavens, I only wish he had undertaken the task before he sailed!" cried Richard.

Their conference was interrupted by Aunt Martha; who, believing her nephew to be alone, came to ascer-

tain from him the cause of his depression, and do her best to relieve it.

What she said, or what she promised, need not be related. Suffice it that the usual pacificatory influence of the Bardsel atmosphere prevailed; and that before a week expired, Richard Hargreave's physiognomy was nearly on a par in point of cheerfulness with the rest of the party.

CHAPTER III.

Though long of winds and waves the sport,
Condemned in wretchedness to roam,
Thou yet shalt reach a sheltering port,
And quiet home.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

It was not, however, without trepidation that William Mordaunt approached his promised interview with his sister. When he said: "Margaret, put on your bonnet and cloak, and come and take a turn with me on the terrace," his voice faltered. She was his all on earth — his child — his darling. He still thought her as superlative as when he offered her his broken marbles and torn Philip Quarll, at Bassingdon Parsonage. Since then, he had loved nothing better. Foolish flirtations he had had; giddy entanglements; but he had given his heart to no one. There was no rival to the holy natural affection which he bore his sister. He was her only earthly champion: — she, his guardian angel.

And if, after all, she should prove untrue? If she should confess that she had deceived him, and was no longer entitled to his confidence? — But no, impossible! Such a face, such a voice, could not be those of an impostor.

They had walked on in silence several minutes, before he found courage to turn the key of the Blue Chamber. He even tried to speak of indifferent things; of Ralph Hargreave's voyage; of Nero's mischiefs. At last, as is usual in such cases, he burst abruptly into the subject nearest his heart.

"Tell me, Margaret," said he; "answer me clearly and truly. Is all at an end between you and Herbert Fanshawe?"

"As much as if the grave had closed between us," was Miss Mordaunt's untroubled reply.

"You do not correspond?"

"I never received but one letter from him; from Palermo, — a farewell letter. You may see it, if you think proper."

"But why never mention it before?"

"I thought the subject might annoy you, and just then, you had troubles enough. To me, it was a source of comfort; as proving that, though all was at an end between us, I had not over-estimated the love I had inspired. From that moment, my mind became settled. You must have seen that I am no longer repining or anxious. I submit to an inevitable misfortune."

At that moment, William Mordaunt could have found it in his heart to imitate certain caperings of Nero's — so light was his heart. If Margaret could thus composedly admit that her heart was in her own

keeping, what hope for the future! He was wise enough, however, not to express his exultation. He left it to poor Dick to pursue his advantage. On the contrary, he took the opportunity of entering into a thousand dry details of business; begging her to appoint a co-trustee with him for the little sum of £1800, her share of their father's estate. It was not necessary to explain how largely the amount exceeded what he had been compelled to appropriate to the payment of his own debts; and Margaret, believing it to be her legal due, requested only that he would wait till Ralph Hargreave's return.

"He will be here in March. Till then, all may remain as it is."

William secretly hoped *not*. His friend Dick must make very ill use of his time if he did not, before the holidays were over, manage to convince her how much a lasting union would tend to their mutual happiness.

Strange to relate, it was the eloquence of the aunt rather than the nephew, which wrought the most effective change in her feelings. The precise spinster, a female Lord Angelo who had never thought of love in her own case, otherwise than as a disorder to be prayed against, like the measles or a typhus fever, hit upon an argument which brought eloquent blushes into the cheeks of Margaret.

"I only wish, my dear," said she, "that you would

come to an understanding with yourself concerning your objections to my nephew; for since you prefer no one else, why shouldn't you marry *him*? You were a girl, almost a child, Margaret, when you first shrugged your shoulders at poor Dick. But you are a woman now. Trouble has rapidly matured you. So that you have no excuse either for not knowing your own mind, or for having one you are ashamed of. It can't be for his looks, my dear, that you discard him. You, so pure and so modest, would scarcely set such store on personal gifts. And even if poor Dick's honest, sheepish face isn't quite to your liking, do you suppose that kindness and affection, and truth and worthiness, wouldn't blind you to the cut of your husband's countenance before six months were over your head?"

With so plain-spoken a special pleader to back him, with William continually elevating his friend by deference to his understanding and principles, how, *how* was she to hold out? They were constantly together. She found in the object of her former disdain, a far more cultivated being than she had supposed him. If wanting in the meretricious brilliancy of Fanshawe, Dick Hargreave possessed sterling sense, and extensive information: the groundwork of a valuable member of society.

That he was willing to incur the risk of disinheritance for the happiness of calling her his wife,

was an argument in his favour such as no female heart was likely to undervalue. And when she saw his clouded brow brighten under the influence of her kinder treatment, she looked so conscious of her power, that the chances were ten million to one he would eventually come off the winner.

No one, in short, was surprised, not even old prudish Goody Rawson, when it was announced in the family that the wedding-day was fixed.

Aunt Martha's practical sense had again befriended them.

"Don't plague my brother further on the subject," said she. "He has given his conditional consent. Let him know when the event is over; and, for the sake of appearances, he will sooner or later come round."

Even William Mordaunt was forced to admit, that pride, "by which sin fell the angels," and by which sin so many mortals contrive to mar their earthly happiness, ought not to interfere with prospects so auspicious.

Poor Aunt Martha! The maternal instincts, dormant in her nature, woke up as naturally on occasion of a wedding under her roof, as though she had been a dowager-duchess, getting rid of the ugliest of half-a-dozen portionless daughters. Away she went, per express-train, to Liverpool, to hurry together a rich *trousseau*, as may be done at sight where a liberal hand and over-flowing purse are under contribution.

"My nieces are too advantageously married," argued Aunt Martha, "to require aid of mine; and I may, therefore, choose my pet and heiress where the Hargreave family are most likely to derive happiness and credit."

A dower was consequently settled upon the future Mrs. Hargreave, including the estate of Bardsel, such as rendered innocuous the thunder-storms of Dursley Park.

Never was spinster so happy as Aunt Martha, while arranging with her kinsman Ebenezer, certain items of the marriage contract; with her Scotch gardener, the exotics that were to figure at the wedding-breakfast; and with Margaret herself, how many letters per week were to pass between them, when the young couple were settled in London after the meeting of Parliament.

Interests in common, difficulties in common brought the pair (rapidly becoming the *happy* pair) closer together. As a matter of family formality, Margaret wrote to acquaint her brother Reginald at Palermo, and her aunt, Lady Milicent Macwheeble at Bath, with her approaching marriage; from the latter, receiving back her letter in an envelope, addressed in the German text handwriting of the reverend doctor; from the former, some weeks after the event had taken place, a letter of warm congratulation, on the part of the Honourable Mrs. Mordaunt and himself, which had

every appearance of being copied from the Complete Letter Writer. There was ten times more kindness in the gripe of the hand with which old Ebenezer bestowed on his new kinswoman on her wedding-day a string of pearls worth a Jew's ransom; and fifty times more cordiality in Aunt Martha's gleeful school-children, when they came to throw flowers on the path of that fairest of brides, on her way to the church portal.

When the handsome travelling-carriage, presented by the thoughtful aunt, rolled from the door of Bardsel Tower, the huzzas of a thousand grateful hearts attested the liberality with which the families of Bardsel and Hargreen did honour to the joyful event.

"On the 2nd of February at Bardsel, by the Rev. Randle Brooke, rector of the parish, Richard Hargreave, Esq., M.P., to Margaret, only daughter of the late Dean Mordaunt," was the simple notification transmitted to the newspapers by William Mordaunt. But some days afterwards, came forth a pompous paragraph; describing the bridegroom at full length, as only son of Sir Thomas Hargreave, Bart., M.P., of Dursley Park, in —shire, and Oak Hill, in the Isle of Wight; and the bride as only daughter of the late Honourable and Very Reverend Reginald Hammond Mordaunt (brother to Henry, Viscount Mildenhall), by Lady Mary, second daughter to the Earl of Bournemouth.

"Good!" exclaimed Ebenezer Hargreave, shaking

his jolly sides with laughter. "This here's of home manufacture! — Hurrah! — The heart of Dursley Park is on the melt. In a year's time, mark my words, all will be forgiven and forgotten."

Even Aunt Martha, though her interference in her nephew's behalf had been resented by rigid silence on the part of her brother, was satisfied that a reconciliation was at hand.

"I groodge him his darter-in-law! By Jove and John Watt, I groodge him his darter-in-law!" cried old Ebenezer, while pointing out to his neighbour at Bardsel Tower, the cheerful opening he discerned for her nephew and niece. "I'd rather have had her for mine, than the book-learnedest Boston Muse, though a President's blood-relation into the bargain. — But don't be diown-hearted, coösin Martha. — Our yoong friends were born wif a golden spune in their mouths; though they'd need may be of a long handle to soop wif the de'il at Doorsley."

A far different view of the case was presented to Dick Hargreave himself, in a letter from Elinor Maitland, still patiently awaiting the preferment of her affianced lover. Sensible, like every one admitted to the acquaintance of Margaret Mordaunt, of the attractive qualities and superior endowments of the Dean's daughter, she heartily congratulated him. But it was her painful task to insinuate a bitter drop into his cup of joy.

"Lose no time my dear Mr. Hargreave," she wrote, "in effecting a reconciliation with your parents. I should ill deserve the title of dear old friend which you assign me in communicating your marriage, if I did not tell you, that Lady Hargreave's health is considered by her friends and physicians very precarious. Independent of her vexations arising from your differences with Sir Thomas, her domestic happiness has been shaken by the loss of her daughters. Your mother is no longer the same woman; and if you value your future peace of conscience, you cannot be too prompt in attempting a reconciliation which might at least avail to console her declining days."

By this reasonable letter, the happy bridegroom was sorely troubled. Unless the health of Lady Hargreave had been hopelessly impaired, he knew he should have heard nothing on the subject from his friend Elinor. And when Parliament met, and his father, instead of hastening up to the assemblage from which he derived his main importance in life, paired off till the Easter vacation, Richard felt that the danger must be imminent, and longed to rush back to Dursley, and tell that suffering, homely, woman — that dying mother — that, in spite of appearances, he still dearly loved her. But wounded pride forbade him to stir. He was afraid of seeming to covet the hundreds of thousands of Sir Thomas; and so, the dying anguish of the mother that bore him, remained uncomforted.

Her daughters, long summoned, came at last; Richard, unsummoned, came not at all.

"Have the chintz covers placed in the drawing-room, and the canvas bags on all the chandeliers," was the final order to the housekeeper, which announced that Lady Hargreave considered her case hopeless. — "It will be very *very* long, before company assembles again at Dursley Park!"

As she drew near, however, to the El Arat dividing Time from Eternity, at whose aspect the narrowest mind expands, — when brocades and embossed plate, and shekels of tested gold give place to visions of skulls and cross-bones, — when the perfumed atmosphere of the gay saloon is resigned for the stifled breath of the sick chamber, whence there is no issue, save into the noisome vault, — wiser words issued from her lips. The dying woman requested that, when she should be no more, her first-born and his wife might be sent for; and not even the worldly Sir Thomas Hargreave or money-spinning Sir Hurst Clytheroe, dared oppose the last request of a faithful wife and thrifty mother, who, for thirty previous years, had indulged in no will of her own.

The young couple were accordingly summoned and forgiven; — summoned reluctantly, forgiven coldly. But Sir Thomas was well-content that his son should grace the pompous funeral, by which he rendered such

honours as he was capable of comprehending, to the memory of the dead.

His daughters and sons-in-law figured in the ceremony with a dignity that was manna to his heart; and when, three months afterwards, the death of Lord Mildenhall and a mulct of certain fees to the Heralds' College, converted William Mordaunt and his sister into Honourables, as if the Dean their father had survived to represent the family honours, he became almost reconciled to his daughter-in-law. At all events, no one better understood the axiom dear to every new dynasty — that unity is strength. Like Napoleon the Great, and other modern potentates, he felt that "a house divided against itself shall not stand."

The Honourable Mrs. Hargreave was accordingly recommended to the homage and attention of his daughters; as wife and mother to the future representatives of the house of Hargreave of Dursley.

CHAPTER IV.

Now, Time hath given my Margaret's face,
A thoughtful and a quiet grace;
Though happy now, her past distress
Hath left a pensive loveliness.
Fancy hath turn'd her fairy gleams
And her heart broods o'er home-born dreams.

WILSON.

THENCEFORWARD, it would have been a difficult task to find a happier couple than the Hargreaves. Previous obstacles tended to enhance their enjoyment of domestic tranquillity: while the tranquil serenity of her days served to develop the matronly beauty of the Dean's daughter, mature her understanding, and endow her with the humble consciousness of her good fortune.

In process of time, two lovely children — a boy and a girl — perfected their happy household. Previous to the birth of the latter, having performed with her brother and husband, a summer pilgrimage of love to the well-remembered old churchyard of Bassingdon, where a marble tablet, erected to the memory of their mother, was now nearly illegible from weather stains, — she promised herself to revive the forgotten name of Mary Mordaunt, by assigning it, if a girl, to her expected infant.

It would be tedious to relate — certainly, tedious to read — a daily chronicle of unsullied domestic happiness. The diary of Robinson Crusoe, even if written by Defoe, would cease to charm if the scene were laid in a land overflowing with milk and honey. Let us pass, therefore, in ellipsis the first six years of Richard Hargreave's life, during which he represented "that Phoenix, called the happiest of men;" established, with his devoted wife and thriving children, in a charming house, in Whitehall Gardens — with Bardsel Tower, and Dursley, and Oak Hill — to say nothing of foreign travel — open for his summer recreation; doing his duty to his country unshackled by the slavery of official occupation; and happy in the friendship of a brother-in-law, who, for perfect congeniality of nature, might have been his born brother.

William, meanwhile, had worked his way to a liberal income, which rendered him proudly independent of the generosity of the new Lord Mildenhall. But even with the Mildenhalls themselves, the Hargreaves lived on easy terms. Between Margaret and the mercenary Viscountess, no great sympathy of feeling prevailed. But Reginald comprehended the value of so well-estated a relative as Hargreave: — a man universally esteemed; a man who had married his sister without a dowry, and provided nobly for his brother; and whose house and table, moreover, were exactly such as should have done honour to his own

fifteen thousand per annum, had he possessed the courage to enjoy them. He had consequently gone three parts of the way to effect a reconciliation, and obliterate the impression of his previous churlishness.

Had any one reminded the Dean's daughter, in the matronly prime of beautiful five-and-twenty, that had once ventured to reject lot so replete with blessings, she would have replied with an almost incredulous smile. Aunt Martha sometimes hazarded a facetious allusion to her former capricious coyness; when, with little Mary climbing on her father's knees, and little Bill rolling on the floor with poor toothless old Nero, Mrs. Hargreave, side-by-side with her happy husband, enjoyed at Bardsel Tower the recurrence of those autumnal pleasures which had first facilitated a better understanding between them. But Margaret joined heartily in her mirth. Without a wish unfulfilled, without a care for the present or fear for the future, she had indeed grounds for the daily thanksgiving which conveyed her grateful homage to the throne of the Almighty.

There were two persons, however, who watched her prosperous career with the grudging envy of an inferior nature. Lady Arthur O'Brennan was now a widow. Two years after her marriage, the death of the Bishop of Rosstrevor released her from the banishment she found so irksome. According to some authorities, his lordship died of Irish humour and Irish

brogue thrown into his constitution by the constraint of the silent system; according to others, of the superior quality of the claret secured to his daily potations by the handsome fortune of his wife; but leaving in his diocese the credit of having opened his purse-strings and heart-strings alike to papist and protestant, to the great scandal of the heads of the national church.

Lady Arthur, who, on returning to England, a showy widow with a jointure of two thousand a-year, immediately determined to place herself at the head of her father's magnificent establishment in Berkeley Square, had scarcely patience with the secluded habits of her unpretending sister-in-law. Lady Clitheroe, on the other hand, who, in spite of Sir Hurst's efforts to over-gild his inferiorities of birth and breeding, had experienced her full share of those snubs, which the justice of society deals upon all counterfeits, was inexpressedly provoked to perceive that Margaret, who had never wasted a thought, look, or gesture, in paltry endeavours to advance herself in the fashionable world, had attained undesignedly the position which Sir Hurst and herself were vainly labouring to conquer.

Margaret remained happily unconscious of their animosity. Over the mind of her husband, his worldly-wise sister possessed not a shadow of influence; and it was only by hints from intermeddling people, like Barty Tomlinson, whose iron-grey head was still a

Pandora's box of social mischiefs, that she was informed how much Lady Clitheroe was shocked at seeing William Mordaunt an all but stationary guest in Whitehall Gardens; or that Lady Arthur O'Brennan ventured to whisper that Mrs. Hargreave had a sadly provincial air — that she was under-dressed, and a dowdy.

Margaret laughed these accusations over with her husband, when they enjoyed a quiet evening together. But their quiet evenings were fewer than in the first years of their marriage. Richard, no longer a lay-figure returned an Irish borough, was the representative of a struggling manufacturing town; an active co-operator with his cousin Ralph; who, having inherited his father's important stake in the country, was the busy advocate in parliament of a populous district of his native county. As merely the son and heir of the wealthy Sir Thomas Hargreave, Dick might perhaps have become uxorious and supine. But his kinsman was ever at hand to rouse up his dormant energies, and claim his services and exertions; and even Mrs. Ralph, who, to the classical features and fine countenance of a Roman matron, united the over-cultivated and over-active faculties of a Bostonian Madame Roland, was not without her share in stimulating his activity.

Shrinking from all display, nay, as far as was compatible with his position, avoiding every species of

publicity, Hargreave was a highly valuable, because a thoroughly conscientious representative of the people. His father, indeed, regarded him as a radical; and, occasionally, under the influence of Lady Arthur's insidious whispers, rebuked him for the democratic plebeianism of his policy; prognosticating revolution and national ruin from the innovations advocated by that dangerous fellow, the republican of Hargreen. But Dick Hargreave held unmoved the even tenour of his way; which was that of most educated English gentlemen of the nineteenth century — liberalized by travel, and humanized by Christian love.

As in the previous instance of his father, Parliament proved an invaluable school to Richard. His mind acquired consistency, his manners confidence, under the compulsory self-examination consequent upon having opinions to answer for. His mind was thoroughly enlisted in the cause of public progress; and consequently, perhaps, a little too much estranged from the trivialities of domestic life. It is difficult to divert one's attention from the majestic manœuvres of a seventy-four, to hail the dancing pleasure boats spreading their light sails in the breeze.

He had less need, however, than most public men to regret the occupations which deprived his wife of his society. William Mordaunt was always at hand to be the escort of his sister; and Hargreave was consequently unvexed by solicitude when detained by an

important debate from the dinner-parties and assemblies they would otherwise have attended together. Nobody expects to see an active member of Parliament perpetually dangling after his wife; and Mrs. Hargreave and Mr. Mordaunt were nearly as often announced together at fashionable parties, as though they had been united by marriage rather than birth. Mordaunt was a general favourite; the type of a well-born, well-bred, popular London man, invited every where, welcome every where. His sister could not be better and safer than under his wing.

Had it not been for such a mainstay, Margaret's unambitious nature would have been perfectly content to subside into the shade of her well-ordered home. Engrossed by her husband and children, she cared little about the world; *too* little according to the Clitheroes and Lady Arthur. *She* had not served to the severe task-work of fashion, that early apprenticeship which appears essential to inculcate due respect for certain names and certain habits. Needless therefore were the exhortations of Ralph's wife, her didactic cousin Virginia, against submission to conventional slavery; and Richard had the happiness of finding his Margaret as pure of soul, as upright, and as simple, at the end of five seasons in town, as when holding her father's hand by the fireside at the Deanery, or sketching beech-trees at Bardsel by the side of the mountain stream.

Among those who rendered her their unqualified, though constrained homage, was Herbert Fanshawe; now noted as one of the most rising men of the day. Fanshawe had long since established himself as a noun-substantive. Sir Claude was gathered to the forefathers to whom, in his life-time, he had been careful never to allude. During the absence of his son in the Mediterranean, the K. C. B., who had so shrouded his origin in obscurity that, at his decease, no date could be inscribed on his coffin, was found one morning dead in his bed, at his lodgings in Spring Gardens. Not so much as a menial had closed his eyes. For in his ambition to remain, if not a hero, at least an Adonis to his valet-de-chambre, Sir Claude never admitted the attendance of *his* at his toilet, after or before a certain hour, sacred to cosmetic duty; and when, on his bell remaining unrung till evening, the door of his chamber was forced open, his attendant for fifteen preceding years could scarcely recognize in the ghastly, aged corpse, the spruce middle-aged master, whose wig and teeth and calves — a moiety of his factitious self — were nightly laid aside on his dressing-table.

Little besides these miserable bequeathments remained for his son; excepting the results of the worst education bestowed on an *ingenuus puer* since the days of Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield. But most people considered that Herbert was greatly the gainer

by the loss of his father's precepts and example. His good gifts would now appear. No one had ever disputed his abilities; and as his supple nature captivated friends in all directions, it was not long before he was elevated on a pedestal in public life, at once commanding the deference of the vulgar, and requiring him to be studious of his attitude.

Of the seven years which had elapsed since his departure for the Mediterranean with Lord Fitzmorton, five had been occupied in diplomatic service: as attaché at Naples, Madrid, St. Petersburg, and finally as Secretary of Legation in the head-quarters of diplomacy, Paris. Such a superstructure of moral schooling, if little calculated for the benefit of the immortal soul, could scarcely fail to effect what the exterior of Mr. Fanshawe undeniably presented — the perfection of a finished gentleman. He was so quiet — so unemonstrative — so unpretending! You might be twenty times in his company before you dreamed of asking his name. But when you *had* asked it, after a further glance at his deportment and half an hour's attention to his easy flow of conversation, you wondered how it was possible he could have a moment escaped your notice. By those who had once conversed with him, he was sure to be singled out in all societies, again and again. Not a word jarred against the feelings or wishes of his interlocutor. Yet he had the appearance of frankness; and in ceding to the opinion of others,

contrived to exhibit a progressive conviction, highly gratifying to his converter.

"Throughout all your London society, *chère Comtesse*," said the Marquis d'Altavilla, the Neapolitan Secretary of Legation, to one of the conscript mothers of the fashionable world, "I have met with nothing like Fannsho'. Ah! Fannsho' he is charming! In Italy, we much admired Fannsho' as a *brave garçon*. Here, I find him progressed into a consummate man; to be one day a statesman, and, *en attendant*, the best company in the world."

By this, it may be inferred that Fannsho' was a general favourite. For Altavilla was a passive interpreter of fashionable opinion. Like most astute Italians, he was the echo of the powerful, — the shadow of the great; and had Bayard or the admirable Crichton been wandering about St. James's Street, and black-balled at White's, Altavilla would not have returned his bow. By studious attention to the rising sun, and the progress of the fixed stars, the well-whiskered Marquis had made rapid way in London life. For his object was not, like most of his countrymen, to sell a few second-rate pictures and antiquities, at first-rate prices, and carry back to his dilapidated home some credit as "a sportsman," or judge of horseflesh. The Marquis d'Altavilla was Coelebs in search of a well-jointed widow; and, with the smile of a Jesuit and trailing flat-footed tread of a Franciscan, insinuated himself,

petit à petit comme l'oiseau fait son nid, into the best-regulated families.

"Fannsho'," who, at Paris, had heard the chimes at midnight with the wily Neapolitan, and fully understood the value of the cowl in which for a specific purpose he enveloped his *mauvaise tête*; requited his praise, in kind, by alluding to the Altavilla palace at Genoa; and the castle of Altavilla's wealthy grandmother in the Milanese; and thus, in imitation of Sir Godfrey Kneller's simile of "the two hands that help to wash one another," their mutual laudations tended wonderfully to the establishment of both, in fashionable estimation.

"Fanshawe knew Altavilla in his own country, where he is amazingly thought of," secured the admission of the latter into the Travellers'. "Altavilla was intimate with Fanshawe at Naples, when he was *attaché*, and declares that no Englishman ever met with such *succès*!" directed towards the handsome stranger the smiles of those who create the midnight sunshine of fashion.

"Blest pair of Syrens!" How many were destined to be misled by their specious song.

It was not till nearly a year after "Fannsho's" establishment in London, that chance brought him into contact with the Dean's daughter. He inquired, on his arrival in England after the Hargreaves; and finding them occupy what he considered a less than second-

rate position, — decently buried, as he called it, in the leaden coffin of domestic felicity, — he congratulated himself that he should see nothing of them. “The renewal of that sort of early acquaintance was always a bore.” Even William Mordaunt had not fallen in his way. For Fanshawe revolved in an exclusive orbit. He lived in the thrice-distilled odour of fashionable sanctity; whereas William was content to dine at the Athenæum, hear the opera from a stall, nay was occasionally seen applauding a new play from the public boxes! Fannsho’ and Altavilla were scarcely cognisant of such people.

Mrs. Hargreave had observed in the papers a notification of Herbert Fanshawe’s arrival in London; but with as little emotion as she would have read that of Esther Pleydell, — now the plausible wife and nurse of a superrheumatised DD. To her, he was no more than one of those youthful visions which disappear from the mind of a happy matron and mother, as trap-ball, bat-fowling, dog-carts and tandems, from that of the father of a family. She was not a frequenter of balls or assemblies. Her husband, devoted to his parliamentary duties loved to pass at home, their cheerful happy home, the evenings he could command for private enjoyment; a mode of life for which she was qualified alike by her retiring nature, and country-bred girlhood. It was consequently from her sister-in-law, Julia — though a bishop’s widow, still as much

Julia as ever — that she first heard mention of her former love.

For Lady Arthur O'Brennan managed to flutter round the outskirts of the circle among whose "thrones, dominions, prinedoms, powers," Herbert Fanshawe was a Serene Highness. During a severe illness by which Sir Thomas Hargreave was attacked one bitter spring, three years after the death of his wife, his daughter had installed herself as his nurse; and during his convalescence, did the honours of his house so pleasantly, that she had ever since remained in Berkeley Square, enjoying, on sufferance, the luxury created by thirty thousand a-year. And whereas to a foreigner — even a foreigner possessing a mythical grandmother with an apocryphal castle in the Milanese, — such luxury appears scarcely less than royal, d'Altavilla paid assiduous court to the really handsome and nominally millionaire widow. Till the arrival in England of Fannsho', indeed, he was unaware of her ancestral insignificance. But even when apprised of the humble origin of the Hargreaves, the Marquis was too well satisfied with Sir Thomas's hospitality to withdraw his suit; while his informant affected such respectful deference towards the lady of Altavilla's courtship, that it was impossible for her to advance a step nearer towards intimacy. The son of Sir Claude was one of those who can assign to others the exact limitation of *their* acquaintance.

"I suppose you have met your old friend, Herbert Fanshawe?" inquired Lady Arthur of Margaret, in the course of a morning visit, made on pretence of condolence respecting the illness of her little niece, but in reality to ask what she fancied would be a trying question. — "Not *seen* him! — Why he goes everywhere!"

"And I nowhere," replied Mrs. Hargreave. "Dear Mary's illness keeps me more than usually at home."

"You will find him immensely altered."

"Probably, then, I have seen him without recognising him. At our age, seven or eight years effect so complete a change!"

"Richard is not much altered. But then *he* has no physiognomy. Mr. Fanshawe, who used to have so wild and picturesque a look, has sobered down into a gentlemanly man, with regular features and well-trimmed whiskers; who might pass for a banker, or a professor of moral philosophy."

"I heard stories of him from the Delaviles, on their return from Naples," replied Mrs. Hargreave, "which sounded neither very sober, nor very moral, nor very philosophical."

"Lady Delavile is such a censorious woman! I dare say she was angry that he paid no attention to her daughters — part of an attaché's duty, which he was sure to neglect."

"On the contrary, she complained of the vivacity of his attentions. But why vindicate or accuse him? Neither Richard nor my brother have kept up the smallest acquaintance with Mr. Fanshawe; and we shall probably meet as strangers."

Lady Arthur was provoked by what she considered her sister-in-law's hypocrisy. She possessed no standard by which to measure the feelings of Margaret. She had never been a mother. Her married life was spent in a land of exile with an uncommunicative husband. The all-absorbing interest of a really happy home was an influence she could not realize.

Mrs. Hargreave was, however, brought earlier than she had anticipated into contact with the diplomatic professor of moral philosophy.

The following week, the prolongation of an important debate rendered it impossible for her husband to escort her to a Royal Concert; and William Mor-daunt brought from the House of Commons the unwelcome news that his brother-in-law was required to speak, but that she must proceed alone to the Palace.

Margaret demurred. However sensible of the distinction conferred by the invitation, she preferred pleading indisposition, and remaining absent.

"No — no! You must *really* go!" — cried her brother. "Sir Thomas would be furious. Even Dick would be angry if your shyness prevented your being

present. Write to one of your friends, and ask leave to accompany her — Lady Fitzmorton, for instance.”

“She is not invited.”

“Or Lady Delaville?”

“At Brighton. And it is now too late to propose myself to any one with whom I am less intimate.”

“Reginald and Lady Mildenhall are going. I met her ladyship sneaking into Howell and James’s last week, with a face care-craped by the necessity of buying a new gown.”

“I would far rather stay away than accompany them. Reginald is civil enough; as kind, I suppose, as it is in his nature to be. But Lady Mildenhall is as cold as a stone. She always seems to mistrust me.”

“So she does her own sisters. I dare say she likes you quite as much as she likes other people. And my brother and sister-in-law are exactly the persons for you to be seen with. Say yes, Margaret; and I will be off to Carlton Terrace, and settle the business for you in a moment.”

Margaret was too much in the habit of saying “yes” to those she loved, to persevere in her reluctance. And as forms of the most decorous amity were maintained by the Viscount and Viscountess towards the brother and sister who were no longer in want of their kindness, the arrangement was easily effected. Mrs. Hargreave’s carriage was to follow them to the Palace; and they could find seats together.

William Mordaunt, who had seldom occasion to see his sister in full dress, arrayed in the splendid family diamonds with which the pride of Sir Thomas had prematurely endowed the future "Honourable Lady Hargreave," was inexpressibly struck as he led her to the carriage, by the beauty of her face and figure. The only drawback ever urged against its perfection, even by the partial Aunt Martha, was a deficiency of colour. And now, the excitement of a nervous panic, aided by the brilliancy of her dress, produced a momentary flush. William gazed at her till the heart within him thrilled with pride. There was something in her guileless face so different from the set smile and tutored glances of the daughters of fashion; seared by perpetual candle light, and haggard from unwholesome vigils. Mrs. Hargreave's beauty was as the simple beauty of a child, whose bloom comes and goes like April sunshine; whose eyes are unwatchful, whose smiles spontaneous as a rainbow.

But had he chanced to accompany her to the concert, his admiration of the charming combination of girlhood and womanhood developed in her beauty, would have increased a thousand fold. The dawning of life in Pygmalion's fabled statue can scarcely have been more touching than the changes of Mrs. Hargreave's countenance under the influence of music. Though passionately fond of it, the secluded life she led prevented her ear from being familiarized with

the *chef-d'œuvres* of the day. It was seldom she heard so exquisite a performance as she had now occasion to enjoy; and her lovely face was lighted up with a radiance from within, such as Guido has shed on the seraphic features of his saints.

So striking, indeed, was the influence of this silent ecstasy, that Lord Mildenhall was almost angry at the number of persons who, at the close of the concert, accosted him with more familiar greeting than usual, for the sole purpose of inquiring the name of his companion. Heaven knows, he had never been so questioned concerning his sour-faced Anne; and it seemed almost insulting to be forced to announce as his sister, one whom the magnates of the land regarded as a stranger. It was not the first time the Viscount had found occasion to blame the seclusion in which the Hargreaves lived immured.

Lady Mildenhall, meanwhile, peevish at the sensation her sister-in-law was creating, and unaccustomed to share with any body the attention of her lumpish lord, insisted on hastening away the moment the concert was at an end. Morose and unsociable, she hated to witness in other women the graces in which she was so lamentably deficient; and instead of being allowed to chat for a few minutes in the refreshment-room with his friends and neighbours, Lord Mildenhall was hurried down stairs, in search of cloaks and carriages.

As is the case with all royal entertainments, from which every one departs at the same moment, a tedious pause ensued. Lady Mildenhall grumbled and shivered; while his Lordship made his way again and again to the entrance. He even availed himself of the proffered services of a somewhat saturnine man with whom he had been conversing about Florence, and the grand-ducal balls: — an old Italian acquaintance, to whom Lady Mildenhall vouchsafed a bow ten degrees below freezing point.

Poor Margaret, anxious only lest the two carriages should not be announced together, so that, after all, the priority of the Mildenhall's departure might leave her alone, took no heed of anything but the names successively called. She had no eyes for her brother's companion. The friends of Reginald were rarely interesting. Moreover, the interposing figure of the Marquis d'Altavilla, who was paying servile court to a dinner-giving Duchess, in their vicinity, completely obscured him.

At length, welcome sounds of "Lord Mildenhall's carriage — the Honourable Mrs. Hargreave's carriage!" greeted her from afar; repeated enviously by those about her, who were wearying for the announcement of their own. The selfish Anne clung instantly to the arm of her husband, and hurried him off towards the door; Lord Mildenhall contenting himself with glancing over his shoulder at his sister, who,

flurried and embarrassed, was making her way through the crowd.

In a moment, an outstretched hand facilitated her progress. The saturnine stranger pressed eagerly past the thick duchess and thin diplomat: and before she had time to answer the question of "Mrs. Hargreave, will you give me leave to offer you my arm?" her own was taken. She was carefully escorted through the throng; and as, on arriving at the grand entrance, crowded with attendants, her carriage proved to be the first, with the steps already let down, she was hurried into it before she had time to recover her breath, or do more than recognise in her companion a sedate, conventionized edition of the once romantic Herbert Fanshawe! —

CHAPTER V.

Yet sometimes comes a ruffling cloud to make
The quiet surface of the ocean shake,
As an awaken'd giant with a groan
Might show his wrath, and then to sleep sink down.

CRABBE.

AND thus, after so many years of absence and estrangement, those twain were fated to meet again:— parted in a troubled atmosphere — reunited in the brightest effulgence of worldly sunshine.

Such transitions are less rare than might be supposed; especially in England, where custom sanctions so many imprudent attachments, leading to disappointment and pain.

Mrs. Hargreave dwelt little on the circumstances. Her thoughts were engrossed by the fine music to which she had been listening; vexed only that her delight should have been unshared by her husband. But, alas! on arriving at home, she was hastily summoned to the nursery, where her little Mary was again suffering from a feverish relapse.

The following day, the Hargreaves were to have dined with Sir Thomas, in Berkeley Square: and, as the child was in no sort of danger, Margaret, aware that the banquet was to be one of her father-in-law's

pompous displays, insisted that her husband should fulfil the engagement alone.

She would not, however, have supposed his company so great an acquisition to the party, could she have foreseen how speedily he would be put out of sorts by witnessing his sister Lady Arthur's overgracious reception of Altavilla. The Neapolitan Marquis was a man against whom the honest-hearted Richard entertained an insurmountable antipathy. The stealthy deportment and saccharine phrases of the cunning Italian, whom he met frequently in official circles, inspired him with profound distrust. Nor was his countenance brightened on hearing the Marquis inquire of Lady Arthur whether the "biooteefool" Mrs. Hargreave, so much admired the preceding night at Buckingham Palace, was any relation to Sir Thomas?

"I would have asked the question of Fannsho'," said he; "but Fannsho' he was not to return, after taking her to her carriage."

Julia glanced at her brother's face; and seeing it wear a sinister scowl, attributed to jealousy of his wife what was simply the result of disgust at her own coquetry. She hastened, however, to explain the relationship; and presented her brother in form to the man with whom Richard Hargreave had long secretly promised himself never to be acquainted.

After a variety of glozing compliments on the beauty of Mrs. Hargreave, whose diamonds had made almost

as favourable an impression on the calculating Neapolitan as the rich plate and rare wines of his host, Altavilla proceeded to ask leave, after the fashion of his country, to "remit his card at the door of Mrs. Hargreave." And though the bow of the man to whom he was endeavouring to recommend himself, was as repulsive as only a Great British bow, meaning to be uncivil, could possibly be, Altavilla added with a grateful smile, that probably his friend Fannsho' would officiate as his guide to the house, "since he had the honour of being a friend of the family."

Another refrigerating bow; expressing but too plainly Dick Hargreave's determination that neither the old acquaintance or the new should ever be admitted within his gates. Against Fanshawe, however, he entertained no grudge; except as pilot to the insinuating Italian, who was come to buy and sell the English fashionables, his dupes.

"Altavilla don't seem as great a favourite in this house as in most places where the feminine gender is in the ascendant?" whispered Barty Tomlinson to Lord Fitzmorton, raising his eyes from the tawdry album he had been pretending to examine. "His affectionous tones don't blend, somehow, with Dick Hargreave's plain-spoken matter-of-fact."

The young Earl did not choose to be the confederate of Tomlinson's sneer. He was too fond of Altavilla's Sunday dinners, composed of the best of bad

company, the *crème de la crème* of foreign rouéism, (though transacted with the most artful deference to the severities of English decorum,) to risk offending an Amphytrion of such rare qualifications; and turned a deaf ear to the little toady.

An admirable tactician, Altavilla had been scrupulous in paying his harbour-dues to secure an entrance into the port of English fashion, where he now lay at anchor. His banquets at Richmond and Greenwich had done as much for him in London, as, at Paris his *soupers fins* at the Café de Paris or Maison Dorée, after a *bal de l'Opéra*. And though many manly Englishmen besides Dick Hargreave detested his effeminate finicalities, and could make nothing of one of the rougher sex who looked, when mounted on a horse, as uneasy as if bestriding a hyena, or in a battue winced and dodged every moment, as if within range of a Minie rifle or Infernal Machine, there were many boyish *roués*, who, because he shared their orgies and flattered their vices, believed him to be "a good fellow, after all."

"How came it you never told us of your renewal of acquaintance with Mr. Fanshawe?" inquired Lady Arthur of her sister-in-law, when next she visited the cheerful morning room overlooking the river in Whitehall Gardens; where the convalescent little Mary, still extended on the sofa of honour, was exercising the skill of Uncle William in sketches made for her amusement, after the renowned style of

The young lady of Sweden,
Who went in a slow-train to Weedon,

"Because it passed wholly out of my mind," replied Margaret, calmly. "When I returned from the palace, our whole attention was absorbed by Mary's attack. Since then, I have seen no one but my brother, to whom, by the way, I *did* mention that Mr. Fanshawe had put me into the carriage."

"What matters it, whether you did or no?" interrupted William Mordaunt, pettishly. "Hargreave and I have met Fanshawe a dozen times since his arrival in town. Hargreave was talking to him yesterday for half-an-hour in the lobby of the House of Commons. But ten to one, Dick did not think it worth while to mention it to *you*."

"Yes; he told me at breakfast how much he thought Mr. Fanshawe improved. In his case, the old theory that the boy is father to the man, seems to have been disproved. My husband declares that there is not a vestige in him of our old acquaintance, the son of Sir Claude."

Lady Arthur was reduced to play with her *breloques* to conceal her amazement. To what, then, was she to attribute her brother's ill-humour at the dinner in Berkeley Square? In presence of William Mordaunt, however, against whom she had a long-standing pique, she would not be caught at a disadvantage.

"Richard shows some tact," said she, "in swimming

for once with the current, which he is too apt to oppose. Mr. Fanshawe is universally popular. I heard him spoken of the other day at S— House as the most agreeable man of the day; the only one, perhaps, who exhibits some tinge of the high-breeding of the old court. By the way, Margaret, it would not have hurt him to leave his card in Berkeley Square. Such an attention is due to a man of my father's age, an intimate friend of Sir Claude Fanshawe's."

Mrs. Hargreave was busy picking up one of the scattered leaves of her brother's comic sketches, and did not hear the suggestion.

"I hope Richard will give him a hint on the subject. Mr. Fanshawe is the sort of conversational man whom my father delights to see at his table; and however important he may think himself, he will find at our house a considerable circle of his friends."

"Better empower *me* to tell him so, Lady Arthur," said William Mordaunt, drily. "And I will take care to add that, ever since *you* presided over Sir Thomas's household, the *cuisins* has been all that the best palate and worst appetite could desire. Don't trust to Dick. He never gives messages; or if he does, in so absent a manner, that he is pretty sure of delivering them to the wrong person. *He* would be telling Ralph Hargreave and his Yankee wife to call upon Sir Thomas, and be asked to dinner."

"What a specimen of the softer sex!" continued he

addressing his sister, after Lady Arthur, having accomplished her mission, was driven into a hasty departure. "Poor Julia, — poor, foolish, frivolous Julia! However Herbert Fanshawe may have progressed, *she*, at least, has remained stationary as leader of the Futurarians."

"Lady Arthur enjoys life in her own way," replied his more indulgent sister. "Home-pursuits or home-affections, are foreign to her nature."

"Whereas the triumph of adding a countess or two per annum to her visiting-list, — of collecting fine people round her father's dinner-table, — and exhibiting fine dresses in crowded heated rooms, night after night, — constitutes her notion of human happiness. Miserable man that I should have been, Meg, with such a doll stuffed with bran for my wife or sister!" —

"My sister-in-law's views and tastes accord perfectly with those of her father," replied Margaret, mildly. Sir Thomas is shocked at *our* hum-drum way of life. He would fain see our names continually in the papers; and quarrelled with his son for refusing to allow my face to figure in an Annual."

"Ay! He would have rejoiced that such people as Mrs. Brampton Brylls should hail the Honourable Mrs. Hargreave, described in the magnificent prose of the Album of Court Beauties!" said William, laughing. "Sir Thomas was always a tuft-hunter. I have seen his son put to the blush in former days, by his flagrant

toadyism of anything with a coronet on its head. From that species of snobbism, Heaven be thanked, my friend Dick is free."

"Too much so, perhaps; for his own independence of spirit causes him to judge harshly of the motives of others. He accuses even his cousin Ralph of subservience to rank and station."

"Not Ralph, surely! Only his American wife; as keen after lords and ladies, as a beagle after a hare! What would you have? To the inquiring mind of a Boston Corinne, such splendours are natural curiosities. The fair Virginia hunts up coronets and Garters as we, if we visited China, should look out for little feet and Mandarins of the First Button. She told me the other day, she would give worlds to be invited to Mildenhall Abbey, that she might get 'an insight into Feudal Times.'"

"I can find readier excuses for that sort of curiosity," said Margaret, "than for the restless aspirings of my sister-in-law. Lady Arthur is bent upon establishing herself in the great world by a brilliant marriage. Even in girlhood, Julia regarded wedlock as a means and not an end; and, untaught by experience, would rather be a miserable fine lady, than the happiest of wives."

"Then why baulk her fancy? There are plenty of gouty peers who would jump at so handsome a nurse, reinforced by so handsome an independence."

"May she never find one! In the first place, because there is always a chance that she may soften into natural feelings; in the second — forgive my selfishness — (the foot of clay peeps out at last, William) if she should marry so well as to desert Sir Thomas, what is to become of *us*? — We should be forced to spend the greater part of our time at Dursley and Oak Hill."

"Dreadful alternative! Two of the most charming places in the kingdom!"

"Not to me, dear William. Dursley Park is connected with the most painful scenes of my life. I never pass the lodge-gates, that a cloud does not come over my spirits. Lady Arthur is often severe upon our mania for spending so large a share of our holidays at Bardsel Tower; and it would be scarcely gracious to tell her that, independent of motives of gratitude towards that good old friend who has been twice a mother to me and mine, I delight in the simple habits of the place. There, I can enjoy the free air of the country. There, I am not over-ridden by pompous country neighbours. There I am completely happy."

"And so you will be at Dursley, some of these days, when you are its mistress, and can reform its vulgar pretentiousness."

Mrs. Hargreave shook her head.

"Let no man in this world rely upon his neighbour's consistency," cried William, "far less upon his

own. Here am I, in my youth a very Herod, who would have shot down a brood of children as cheerfully as a covey of partridges, wasting my time (which is the property of the Queen's majesty) in amusing an ailing little girl. There is Dick, who, at one time, I believe, thought seriously of enlisting, or becoming mate to a merchant-vessel, rather than be forced by his father into Parliament, now the most pains-taking of plodding members!" —

"Yes, because he *is* a working member. My husband objected only to the pretension of playing the orator for the purpose of official advancement."

"No matter. He spoke like a good one the other night on Ralph Hargreave's Fiscal Reform Bill; precisely because no one had urged him to open his lips. It came naturally to him. The world has shaken him into his place, and into a sense of his duties. And so, Madam my sister, will it be with yourself. As Lady Hargreave of Dursley Park, you will acquire a taste for the spot and habits of life entailed from generation to generation on your posterity."

"Either you mistake me or I mistake myself," was Margaret's steady reply. "Some birds build in the loftiest tree, others on the ground. If I know my own nature, *I* prefer the lowly nest."

"Ay! coupled with the privilege of the lark, to soar from it at will into the skies."

"Rather the privilege of the linnet — to sing my-

fledgelings to rest," whispered Margaret, pointing to the little invalid, who had dropped off to sleep during their grave discussion. "Seriously, dearest William, I know not whether it is because I was born under the roof of a parsonage; or whether I inherit my mother's debility, or my poor dear father's indolence; but I *prefer* an obscure home and quiet life, to any splendour this world could offer."

"Sweet Anne Boleyn!" was William's ironical rejoinder, "do you expect me to play the part of the old Gentlewoman, and listen to your declarations that —

You swear 't is better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow? —

Don't expect it of me, Margaret. When your time comes, you will ascend your throne as contentedly as other hereditary princesses. Ay! and do it honour with the best of them."

Little did either brother or sister surmise how speedily the prediction would be accomplished. At the close of the session, Sir Thomas and his daughter were to repair to Oak Hill; while Richard and his family completed the summer in the pleasant coppices of Bardsey Tower; enabling the most maternal of spinsters to take her turn in spoiling the lovely children who were to convey the name of Hargreave to

a future generation. They were all to meet together at Dursley, when the shooting season commenced.

They *did* meet there. — But it was for no sporting or festive purpose! — The family was reunited at the mouth of the family vault; to behold the man so enamoured of worldly consequence consigned to the nothingness of the dust. Sir Thomas had died suddenly; under mental excitement which called into play some chronic infirmity — aneurism — or more probably ossification of the heart, — for what human heart could be less elastic.

Barty Tomlinson always maintained that the wealthy baronet expired in a fit of rage, on being applied to by the Marchese d'Altavilla for an augmentation of Lady Arthur's jointure; a man so low-born and low-bred being unable to discern the difference between the "rascally foreigners," whom he supported by subscribing to Polish associations and Mansien House balls, and the representative of one of the first houses in Italy. Certain it was that Altavilla contrived to be suddenly ordered to the Bohemian baths, on finding that two thousand paltry pounds a-year, constituted the inheritance of the fair widow whom he had adored while presiding over the expenditure of her father's thirty thousand; and as he was, shortly afterwards, recalled by his Double Sicilian master, and has never returned to renew his mercenary courtship, there may be some truth in the report

that he has made a Marchesa of the heiress of a wealthy merchant of Lucca; to whose olive gardens the salads of civilized Europe stand largely indebted.

As the travelling carriage of the new Sir Richard rolled through the lodge-gates of Dursley, on their road to the closely-shuttered mansion containing the mortal remains of him who had never seemed to concern himself about aught that was more than mortal, Lady Hargreave involuntarily reverted to the confession she had recently made to her brother. More than ever she felt a cloud come over her spirit. More than ever she felt conscious of forebodings connected with the spot. —

She drew the little girl who was sleeping on her knee more closely to her bosom, and defied that evil augury. But even while defying it, silent tears dropped from her eyes on the bright ringlets of the sleeping child. —

CHAPTER VI.

Blest in each other, but to no excess,
Health, quiet, comfort, form'd their happiness,
Yet strange would either think it, to be told
Their love was cooling, or their love was cold.

CRABBE.

THE unities having been already flagrantly violated in the foregoing pages, it requires only a slight extension of imagination on the part of the courteous reader, to suppose two years elapsed from the period which admitted Sir Richard and Lady Hargreave as sovereign masters of Dursley Park and its princely revenues.

The forebodings of the Dean's daughter had been thoroughly discountenanced; for if ever human happiness flourished on earth, it was under that well-fated roof. Their children were healthy, lovely, and promising; their mutual confidence was immaculate. The dearest brother of the one, was the dearest friend of the other; and above all, instead of succeeding to one of those neglected estates and dilapidated houses, which, as in the case of the new Lord Mildenhall, absorb the resources and leisure of years ere they regain the state from which old age and covetousness have suffered them to be degraded, they had only to step

into the enjoyment of every perfected luxury. — Their utmost desire was to *modify* rather than *increase* the ostentatious splendours of the place.

But alas! if the old Adam survives in fallen man, the ancient serpent still flourishes in social temptations. In the second year of his reign, Sir Richard, roused into fatal comparisons by a visit to Lord Fitzmorton, the new lord lieutenant of his country, suddenly perceived the necessity of adding a library and audit-room to the mansion which had sufficed the wants of the Dukes of Hereford. An architect — a sort of master of the revels appurtenant now-a-days to most aristocratic households, — was summoned from town; and within four-and-twenty hours of his arrival, Sir Richard was made to perceive that he and their Graces of Hereford had been imposed upon into residing in a hovel. The doors at Dursley were too narrow, the windows a world too wide, the roof unsuited to the climate. The staircase was contracted, the portico vulgar, the offices dark; Mr. Stucco, (Sir Simon Stucco, I believe,) wondered how a family so opulent could have so long made up its mind to be thus miserably lodged.

Made to *perceive*, is perhaps too strong a term. Made to *admit* would be more correct. Easy-natured as ever, Sir Richard was scarcely at the pains to contravert his architect's decree that, since the faults of his family residence were to be partially corrected, it

would be better to reform them altogether. If they were to be plunged into brick and mortar, or Portland stone and mortar, a few ton of rubbish more or less, and a few months' inconvenience more or less, could matter little to the proprietor.

"Leave it to me, Sir Richard," said Stucco, when his victim was enlarging on the simple beauty of the grand old library at Morton Castle; "Leave your house to *me*, and I will make it the most complete thing in the kingdom."

Lady Hargreave, though distrustful of such large promises, to her shame be it spoken, uttered not a word of dissent. She requested to see neither the plans nor the estimates. Anything that promised to metamorphose Dursley Park into other than the Dursley Park of former years, was welcome to her feelings.

Nor did William Mordaunt, pleased whenever *she* was pleased, hazard a remonstrance to his brother-in-law. It was only a faithful old friend — it was only Elinor Martland, now on the eve of marriage with the object of her early choice, to whom Sir Richard had just presented a living of £250 a year, — who ventured to say:

"Are you not sacrificing months and years of domestic comfort? Are you not tempting Providence, like the Babylonians of old, by wanting to outbuild your neighbours? — Dear Richard! all the wealth you

have inherited equals not that priceless pearl — Content!"

But we argue in vain to those whose resolutions are already taken. The plans sent down by Stucco were exquisite, the estimates plausible. A clerk of the works, with an adequate staff, was soon established on the premises; and all was rapidly placed in the most admired disorder. Sir Richard gave readily into the excitement. Something of the innate restlessness of the Hargreaves was beginning to agitate his tranquil nature. The stimulus of emulation had some share in his enthrallment. Just as his cousin Ralph's parliamentary activity had roused him into action — perchance because indignant at finding the question "which of the two Hargreaves was on that Committee?" frequently answered by "Ralph, of course, the other is a dead letter," — the idea of surpassing the country-gentlemanlike comfort exhibited by Fanshawe's flimsy fellow-yachter, Fitzmorton, spurred him into needless expenditure. He was neither envious nor jealous; but like many a generous-tempered horse, could not bear to be outdone.

Of all excitements, that of building is next to gambling (or novel-writing) the most absorbing. As Byron sings of another species of construction —

'T is to create, and in creating, live
A being more intense;

and Sir Richard Hargreave found that to create in oak and granite served to double his existence.

Margaret was naturally the sufferer. Her husband's thoughts were engrossed, his time bespoken; and she was more thrown on her own resources than she had ever been since her marriage. The state of the house precluded all possibility of hospitality. William was detained in London by his official duties; and the Clitheroes and Lady Arthur were by no means people to invite for the social enjoyment of a small family circle.

From the moment Elinor Maitland's marriage took her to a distant county, Lady Hargreave depended for amusement solely upon occasional visits to Morton Castle and Delavile Abbey; on returning home from which, Dursley looked drearier than ever.

Mrs. Pleydell, now old and infirm, was occasionally heard to mutter over her cards that, considering all things, it was little to the credit of Lady Hargreave, as daughter to their once popular Dean, that the Dursley carriage was scarcely seen in R—, from year's end to year's end. But who that knew how the Mor-daunts had suffered in that grim old Deanery, (now the battle field of fiery polemic skirmishing) could affect surprise that to the Dean's daughter the sight of the flourishing Elizabethan Office of Messrs. Lazenby and Son was distasteful; and a glimpse of the old Cathedral an afflicting *memento mori*.

Isaac Barnes, the stern and unpopular but right-hearted Dean, alone entered into Lady Hargreave's feelings; and when they met at county dinner-parties, testified, by a cordial pressure of the hand, his sympathy in the motives which restrained their intercourse to a ceremonious exchange of cards.

Even her annual visit to Bardsel was less satisfactory than of old. The nine years which had converted Margaret into a beautiful woman of eight-and-twenty, had converted Aunt Martha into a cross one of sixty-eight. The death of her brother had touched her nearly. Estranged from him during the latter years of his life by the part she had taken in promoting her nephew's marriage, the feeble-mindedness into which much time had depressed her, produced regret and self-accusation. Aunt Martha had outlived, not only her contemporaries, but her strength of mind.

Sir Thomas, Lady Hargreave, Ebenezer were gone; and she detested the new-fangledness of the generation by which they were succeeded. The world was moving too fast for her. Goody Rawson was no longer there; to exhaust her peevishness by a wrangle. Nero lay stuffed in a colossal glass-case in the hall; and Margaret, the only person whom she still loved, had to pay the penalty of favouritism, by listening to her grumblings against Ralph Hargreave's folly in setting up as a lecturer to mechanics far better informed than himself; or against the presumption of Mrs. Virginia

Hargreave, of Hargreen (she was careful to call her Mrs. Virginia Hargreave of Hargreen, to distinguish her from Mrs. Martha Hargreave, of Bardsel), in erecting in their humble village a model factory, model School of Design, model Lyceum, and model Gymnasium, after the fashion of her transatlantic Athens. "As if Old England had anything to learn from New England," mumbled the old lady. "*That would be teaching your grandmother indeed!*"

Sir Richard had ceased to accompany his wife to the North. The first year, he was occupied with rounding the corners of the vast property — landed, funded, colonial — to which he had succeeded. By the following autumn, he had girded on the cares of an improver; and Lady Hargreave, who represented him in the North, had consequently no screen against the missiles perpetually and reciprocally discharged between Bardsel and Hargreen. The children were in some degree withdrawn from her care by the superintendence of a nursery governess, as strict and omniscient as heirship to such a fortune as their father's is supposed to necessitate; and on the whole, much as she loved Aunt Martha, she found it as great a relief to return to Dursley, as it had been to lose sight of it for a time.

Had any one inquired of Sir Richard Hargreave, — a man little in the habit of self-communing, — what produced his intense interest in his improvements at Dursley, or what had warmed up his early political

indifference into such eager sympathy with the great public reformers of the age, he would probably have attributed the change to the usual progress of the human mind from "gay to grave — from lively to severe." But there was far more in the transition than was dreamed of in his philosophy. Between him and his beautiful Margaret, there was little unanimity of nature, taste, or pursuit: and he was unconsciously driven to provide occupation for his mind's leisure. The idiosyncrasy inherited from a feeble mother and inert father, assumed, in Lady Hargreave, the form of moral indifference; nor had the nature of her early training invigorated her powers of mind. Happy and happy-making in her quiet home, she had done little to improve herself. Her efforts to return the fond affection of Dick Hargreave, seemed to have exhausted her faculties. From the moment of her marriage, her life became as much a matter of routine as that of the popular Dean of R—.

English custom has decreed, perhaps injudiciously, that women of the upper classes should be reared in ladylike ignorance of temporal interests, and the practical business of life. Hence arises an apparent coldness towards a thousand occupations — a thousand responsibilities, — which occupy the minds of their husbands. In France, where woman, both as wife and daughter, enjoys her vested rights in the family property, and is required, as a domestic virtue, to

exercise her discretion in its economy and direction, uniformity of worldly interests often supplies, or at all events conceals, the absence of warmer affections.

As a girl at Hephanger, Margaret had been instructed in crochet-work, and the mysteries of Berlin wool; was skilful with her pencil, and as sweet a singer as Desdemona. But of the value of money, or the comparative rights of rich and poor, she knew no more than her lap-dog. Near as she had been to destitution, she was unable to appreciate the importance of an income such as that of her husband; or the duties, public and private, involved in its administration. It appeared to *her* that Sir Richard devoted far too much attention to his agents and lawyers — his bailiffs and farmers. She did not so much as render the honour due to his generosity when, on coming into his fortune, he presented his friend William — her brother William — with a deed of gift to the value of ten thousand pounds. Unaware of the rarity of such actions, she fancied it only a commendable employment of his loose money. She would have given it herself: she concluded that most others would have done the same. While Lord Mildenhall shrugged his shoulders at such an act of Quixotism, as “worthy an ostentatious upstart, capable of any excess of vulgar extravagance,” Lady Hargreave expressed neither gratitude nor surprise.

Nor was this the only subject on which Sir Richard

derived no counsel or sympathy from his wife. Aware of her total ignorance of financial economy; or even the commonest questions of administrative prudence, he was too considerate, too thoroughly good-natured, to bore her by requiring her participation in his affairs. But a separation of interests was thus insensibly created: and, in married life, any separation should be guarded against. The very smallest may widen into a chasm.

The month which, during two following autumns, Margaret had spent at Bardsel Tower, habituated Sir Richard to her absence, — formerly deplored as the severest of trials. He was too much absorbed in his peremptory occupations to perceive the change; and, being frequently called up to town by business with his lawyers, prolonged his bachelor sojourn in Whitehall Gardens and enjoyed his dinner at his Club, as a rational man might do; but not like the devoted husband of other days.

"It is no small comfort to us miserable sinners," said Barty Tomlinson to William Mordaunt, one day, in the reading-room at the Athenæum, "to perceive that Sir Charles Grandison, married, is little more circumspect than Sir Charles Anybody-else, single. If I were the charming Lady Hargreave, I should find a word or two to urge against my husband's declaration of independence.

"No one doubts your finding *words* on any subject,

my dear fellow. It is your meaning that puzzles us."

"I mean, in the present case, that I left Lady Hargreave and her children the other day, on the Kendal railway, making a solitary tour; and that I find Sir Richard in town, prowling surreptitiously in Pall Mall."

"And now try what mischief you can extract out of these simple facts!" — cried Mordaunt. "But don't expect me to undertake the vindication of my brother-in-law; I would not do him so great an injury. Were you capable of understanding the smallest of his virtues, or if you could point out a speck or blemish in his character, I might think it worth while to take up arms in his cause. As it is, Tomlinson, do your worst! — Shoot your arrows at the sun, and welcome!" —

"Come, come, come, — something too much of 'Ercles' vein'" cried the Homunculus with a provoking laugh. "If you take things in this lofty strain, my dear Mordaunt, I shall fancy that poor Hargreave has a weakness for Pratt's or *les coulisses*; or that his business in town is a suit in the Court of Arches."

"A peppery fellow, poor Mordaunt!" he did not fail to add to a brother gossip of his own inches, (an official of the sixteenth magnitude, who, as the Pacolet of the fine ladies, was known by the name of "Early Intelligence,") while William stalked indignantly away.

"But there is some excuse for his thundering in defence of Dick Hargreave. He has pocketed a famous retaining fee. We who saw the making of the Hargreave and Mordaunt match, would not, however, feel much surprised at its breaking. In England, a *mariage de convenance* seldom prospers. The climate don't suit it. They order these things better in France."

Words so pregnant with mischief as these, dropped in a club like seeds scattered by the wayside, though profitless to the husbandman, seldom fail to bring forth fruit. In those idle circles, where, when facts are not forthcoming to supply the morning's tittle-tattle, suppositions are hazarded in their stead; and where, as Gozlan says, "*Heureux qui apporte une banqueroute inédite*," it soon came to be reported that the Hargreaves were less happy together than formerly.

"No shooting-parties at Dursley; this year. No breakfasts there, when the hounds meet in the neighbourhood," was Lord Fitzmorton's observation to Herbert Fanshawe, who listened demurely to his complaints. "Now the Hargreaves have come into their fortune, they don't seem to know what to do with it. I always thought my friend Dick a bit of a snob; and even that pretty wife of his (Mildenhall's sister) has failed to *décrasser* him. A lovely creature, certainly, though Barty Tomlinson calls her the Swans'-down Muff. But if I knew where such another was to be found, it should be mine at any cost. People call me

a confirmed old bachelor. By Jove, they would not say so long, could I obtain a wife like Lady Hargreave!"

Herbert Fanshawe answered not a word. It was not for so cautious a diplomat to announce his own views and wishes concerning the DEAN'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER VII.

Time from her form hath ta'en away but little of its grace,
His touch of thought hath dignified the beauty of her face,
Yet she might mingle in the dance where maidens gaily trip,
So bright is still her dark grey eye, so beautiful her lip!
The faded form is often mark'd with sorrow more than years,
The wrinkle on the cheek may be the course of secret traces,
The mournful lip may murmur of a love it ne'er confest,
And the dimness of the eye betray a heart that cannot rest,
But *she* hath been a happy wife. The lover of her youth
May proudly claim the smile that pays the trial of his truth.

T. H. BAYLEY.

WILLIAM MORDAUNT was provoked with himself, on reflection, for having allowed the observations of an errand-man of the fine ladies, like Tomlinson, to ruffle his temper; especially when he knew, from his own knowledge that, while Hargreave was in town to complete an extensive purchase of land in the neighbourhood of Dursley, Margaret and her children were on a visit at Mildenhall Abbey; for though Sir Richard acceded, with his usual kindness, to the Viscount's desire that the two young families should grow up in cousinly amity, there was something in the stagnant atmosphere of a house governed by Ann Mordaunt and her husband, which rendered an annual visit to the Abbey a penance much to be avoided.

"Margaret is safe and happy at Mildenhall," mused William. "I don't wonder at Hargreave's shirking a

place where, to say nothing of its intrinsic dulness, he is sure to be humbugged out of some piece of patronage or preferment. Reginald would not let Satan himself escape unmulcted, if he once crossed his cloven feet under his dinner-table. But Dick will be going down to fetch away his wife in a few days; and I will take the opportunity to accompany him and satisfy myself, by personal observation, that Tomlinson's insinuations are, as usual, unfounded."

Many years had elapsed — nearly ten — since, in their colloquy at Oak Hill, immediately after the death of the Dean, William expressed to Hargreave his desire that they could visit together the ancient seat of the Mordaunts. By a strange chance, though both had severally paid frequent visits to the Mildenhalls, that wish was still unrealised.

"I go as seldom as I can. There is not a spark of real love between us," said William to his brother-in-law, as, on the appointed day, they travelled together towards the Abbey, (which, most characteristically, was still unattainable by railroad). — "Anne Mordaunt's pinched lips and cold grey eyes chill me to the marrow. I always fancy in them a suppressed smile of triumph, when she displays her seven stunted little olive-branches — which, puny as they are, exclude me from all prospect of succession to the family honours."

"A wretched race, indeed; justifying half that is

urged against consanguineous alliances. I confess disliking her ladyship as much as you do — though not on the same grounds. I have never forgiven her neglect of Margaret, when left a friendless orphan. And if I needed more to make me detest her, it would be the aspect of Mildenhall village; with its horde of little school-less savages, wallowing in winter in the mire, and dozing in summer in the shade. Your father built schools there. But the Mildenhalls, when they sold the next presentation to the living, exacted, — yes, positively exacted, — that the school-houses should be pulled down!”

“Eteignez les lumières, et allumez le feu,”

quoted William. “I no longer wonder at the number of incendiary fires which blazed last year on the estate. The offices have refused all further insurance of my brother’s farms, except at a ruinous premium. Well! we have one comfort. — Margaret gets on famously with Lady Mildenhall.”

“Margaret gets on with anybody. Margaret would not be at the trouble of dissent, if Lord Mildenhall were to advocate a bread-tax, a knowledge-tax, or the re-establishment of catholic restrictions.”

“Laissez faire et laissez passer,

is a system that saves a world of trouble,” said William, laughing. “But, for the love of high art and low, admire the effect of the evening sun streaming over yonder glade! — What a golden landscape! —

And then, people abuse the sunshine of Cuyp and Both as exaggerated!"

"A beautiful spot — a truly beautiful spot!" replied Hargreave, as the venerable outline of the Abbey came in sight, through a vista of unequalled woodland majesty; and involuntarily a sigh burst from his lips, when he reflected how meanly the outlay of eighty thousand pounds, would enable his patched and garbled pallazzo at Dursley, to vie with the solid magnificence of the olden time! On nearing the mansion, they rolled through a succession of Gothic gateways, which might have almost passed for triumphal arches, into a court-yard, the time-bleached stones of whose pavement were white as marble.

On one side, this extensive court, overlooked by the north front of the old Abbey, was divided by a balustrade of pierced stonework from the park, whose ancient oaks extended their gigantic arms, as if to overshadow the partition. Round one of them was a circular bench — the least beautiful, because the oldest of the trees; — its branches, staghorned at the summit, having almost the appearance of being scathed by lightning.

The aged tree was, however, dearly prized and carefully tended, even by the present Viscount, rarely as he noticed trees, except for the value of the timber. For it was said to have been planted, a sapling, by a hand no less venerable than that of Margaret Beau-

fort, Countess of Richmond, one of the benefactresses of the ancient Abbey. A century later, the Virgin Queen herself was known to have rested under it, after the labours of the chase, when on a visit at Theobalds.

As is frequently the case with aged trees thus cared for, the lower branches still retained their richness of foliage; and when Sir Richard Hargreave's carriage turned into the court-yard, two persons, apparently Lord and Lady Mildenhall, were seated on the bench in earnest conversation. Little William Hargreave, playing at their feet, was busily counting over a basketful of chestnuts.

But no! it could not be the Viscount. For as the sound of carriage-wheels intimated the approach of guests, Lord Mildenhall suddenly emerged from the porch.

"We fancied you would not be here till to-morrow," said he, as they drew up before the door. And while he extended to Sir Richard, the greeting which his brother had been the first to jump out and receive, William hastily traversed the court towards the balustrade, and vaulted over it in a moment.

As he suspected, Lady Hargreave was the person seated under the oak tree, with her child playing at her feet. But the cry of joyful salutation with which he was about to hail her, died upon his lips, when the companion with whom she had been so earnestly

engaged, turning suddenly from her to the new comer, displayed to his astonished eyes the features of Herbert Fanshawe!

What business had he there at such a time?

A question best answered by stating the concomitant circumstances attending Lady Hargreave's visit to the Abbey.

Never a very lively abode, the gloominess of the rambling old house, ill-tended by an inadequate establishment, appeared on the present occasion unusually oppressive. Two of Lady Mildenhall's sickly progeny were laid up; and Margaret, though reassured by their medical attendant, entertained an indescribable dread lest their malady might be infectious. Between her own lively children and their formal cousins, there existed small good-will. The little Mordaunts were grudging and peevish; the Hargreaves perhaps a little overbearing; and Margaret's chief study was to keep them friends by keeping them apart.

She had been ten days in the house. A stately dinner party or two, composed of country neighbours invited with most inhospitable reluctance, had alone enlivened her stay; and, but for her pleasure in rambling with the children over the park, and transferring to ivory certain family faces of olden time, — worthies, by means of whose miniature likenesses, she hoped to familiarise her son and daughter with the names and exploits of the Mordaunts, — she would have become

more a victim to *ennui* at Mildenhall Abbey, than she had recently found herself at Bardsel Tower.

One morning, a day or two after the first dinner party, she was seated in the picture-gallery, near one of its embayed windows; occupied in copying the fair features and rich coif of Lady Hameltrude de Mordant, as portrayed by the circumstantial pencil of Holbein: mentally comparing it with a picture at Hephanger, of one of the Bourne family, supposed to be of the same date; which she deeply regretted, never having been allowed to copy. She would have liked to possess it at Dursley, as a supplement to the collection she was now making for her favourite boudoir.

"Nothing brings back past scenes and recollections more vividly than pictures," moralised Lady Mordaunt, as, with her cheeks flushed by interest in her occupation, she continued to raise her eyes towards the mildewed canvas before her, then drop them while she proceeded to retouch the ivory. And, following up this idea, she recalled to mind the beautiful sketch of her mother, by Lawrence, which had brightened the walls of Bassingdon Parsonage, and, at a later period, the still more melancholy library of the Deanery of R—. The drawing was now hanging in her dressing-room at Dursley; and it suddenly occurred to her how, at her husband's and Herbert Fanshawe's first memorable visit to the Dean, Herbert had been charmed by the high-bred loveliness of the face; and how, at his

second visit, he had called Sir Claude's attention to the masterly sketch; probably to withdraw his notice from their own courtship.

The whole scene rose before her. For years it had been dismissed from her mind — as something pernicious. Even now, it recurred, as a mere link in a chain of broken recollections. — She remembered how fondly Herbert Fanshawe had whispered to her, while his father was examining the picture. She remembered how nervous she had felt, lest her own should perceive what was going on, and question her after the departure of his guests. — How Herbert Fanshawe had loved her *then*. — Yes! whatever he might have turned out in after life, — cold, calculating, *blasé*, treacherous, — he, *then*, had truly, *truly* loved her.

At that moment, Lady Hargreave raised her eyes, because some intervening object shut out from her work the always imperfect light of the gothic window; and lo, they fell upon — could she deceive herself — was she still the dupe of her reverie — they fell upon — Herbert Fanshawe!

Self-contained as usual, his greeting was politely respectful.

"I come, Lady Hargreave, as a delegate from Lord Mildenhall," said he, with a slight bow. "He is anxious you should break through your customary rule of 'no luncheon.' The Hartwells are here. I drove over with them from the Priory, where I arrived on

Tuesday, on my way to Morton Castle; and now I am on the spot, my friend Mildenhall claims the performance of a promise I made thousands of years ago, at Florence, that I would spend a day or two at the Abbey to examine his missals."

"You have complied then?" inquired Margaret, a little startled. "Will not the Hartwells be offended?"

"On the contrary. They were prepared for my departure this afternoon; but in another direction. The Colonel undertakes to send over my valet and luggage; unless, indeed, instead of joining the luncheon-party below, you condemn me to depart as I came."

"I am not the hostess here," said Margaret, coldly. "Lady Mildenhall joined of course in my brother's invitation."

"Most kindly. But I thought — I feared —" He hesitated so significantly, that she was forced to expedite his explanation by an interrogatory glance.

"I feared, in short, that *you* might be less indulgent. I am aware that, on learning last year that I was a guest at Morton Castle, you suddenly sent an excuse."

Margaret could not refrain from a smile. "I sent an excuse, one day last winter, to Morton Castle," said she, "because my little girl was attacked with influenza. But till this moment, on my word, I never so much as knew you were acquainted with the Fitzmortons."

"You have probably forgotten that I accompanied Fitzmorton to the East?"

"I remember it now you recall it to my mind. But it is so long ago. Nine years! —"

"*My* memory is apparently better than yours. *My* life has been, in the interim, less incidental — less happy," — added he, in a low voice. "With me, there has been nothing to obliterate early impressions."

Half-angry, half-abashed, Lady Hargreave busied herself in putting up her drawing materials. "If you will kindly inform my brother that I will be with Colonel and Miss Hartwell in a moment," said she coldly, "I will finish my arrangements as quickly as I can, and join you in the dining-room."

Thus dismissed, the intruder made a precipitate retreat; nor was there one objectionable feeling mingled with Lady Hargreave's sincere regret, that the party at Mildenhall Abbey should have received so ill-timed an addition. Nothing doubting that Fanshawe had heard from the Hartwells of her being on a visit to her brother, previous to starting from the Priory, she felt provoked at Lord Mildenhall's unusual exercise of hospitality. Tepid as were his brotherly susceptibilities, he must surely, in former years, have heard her name coupled with that of Herbert Fanshawe, in a manner to render their sojourn under the same roof a cause of annoyance to one and embarrassment to both.

But Lord Mildenhall was not a man of very vivid

reminiscences. Had he been so, it would have been difficult for him to converse, as he did, with his brother and sister of their youthful days; as though he had always been a model of fraternal affection. He had pressed Mr. Fanshawe to stay, simply because, having once hasarded a general invitation to him to visit the Abbey, it was less trouble to pay off the engagement while Lady Hargreave was staying in the house. He even apologised to Fanshawe, when the ladies had left the dinner-table on the day of his arrival, for having betrayed him into the *ennui* of a family party; more particularly, as he feared that Lady Mildenhall, having a sick nursery to attend to, would be able to give him very little of her time.

With the same memorable tact, he entreated his sister to aid him in making the house agreeable to his guest.

"Anne is so much engaged with the children," said he, "that I reckon upon you, Margaret, to assist me in entertaining this fine gentleman, who will be a dead weight on our hands. It won't be labour lost, I can tell you. Fanshawe is a personage in his way: a great man at Woburn and Wynyard and Nuneham, and all that sort of thing: — a rising man, too, who may turn out a useful friend hereafter to the boys."

At the littleness of her brother Reginald's motives, Margaret had long ceased to marvel. The only thing that *did* astonish her, was the court paid to him by

his sagacious guest. Even to Lady Mildenhall, even to her little daughters, whining like guinea-pigs, and blooming like marigolds, his assiduities were as devoted as those paid by aspiring ensigns in the guards to some superannuated ambassadress. It is true one of the ungainly girls was Lady Hargreave's god-child, and name-child: and he was never weary of calling her "Margaret — dear little Margaret." There was evidently a latent charm for him in the name of Margaret Mordaunt.

In that instance only, however, was there the slightest hint of recurrence to the past. He contrived to make the conversation as general as possible. It was not easy to start a subject in which the Mildenhalls' could interest themselves. But Fanshawe was able to give them news of Italian cities and Italian people, whom they had seen and known together; and his descriptions of Spain and Portugal, which he had since visited, were so graphic and so original, that Margaret was often forced to lay down her tapestry to listen. Even when compelled by the Viscount's solemn catechization to enter into the ticklish chapter of French politics and Parisian society, Fanshawe was not betrayed into those flippancies of wicked wit, which at one time constituted his mother-tongue. He contrived at once to edify and to amuse.

"Quite an altered man," said Lady Mildenhall, to her sister-in-law, after duly be-lauding the strenuous

efforts made by Fanshawe, the following day, to entertain her jog-trot country neighbours. "It would be very kind of you, Margaret, if you would consent to accompany him on horseback to-morrow; as he wants to try the bay mare which Mildenhall has offered to sell him. Your brother is forced to attend the Quarterly Sessions; and one can't expect Mr. Fanshawe to spend the whole morning alone."

"My sister Lady Hargreave will be delighted to ride with you, if you choose to try the mare," was Lord Mildenhall's parting word next morning to his guest, as he stepped into his phaeton after breakfast; — a promise he was partly justified in making, for Margaret had been too much startled by the proposal of her sister-in-law to offer serious opposition. "Margaret is a famous horsewoman, and will show you the way across the country, if you are inclined to visit the grounds at Castle Leeming, of which Miss Hartwell was talking to you in such raptures the other day. Margaret! if you go so far as Castle Leeming, be sure you do not allow Mr. Fanshawe to overlook the pinetum."

Unwilling to betray the uneasy consciousness under which she laboured, Lady Hargreave tacitly assented. It would have been too great a compliment to her companion to evince mistrust of herself or *him*. They went therefore as completely alone together as if an

attendant groom had not been following them, at twenty yards distance; and Margaret's momentary embarrassment speedily disappeared as they proceeded along one of those beautiful by-roads, through wooded glades and over breezy commons, which so many an English estate contains within its favoured demesne. Both were apparently occupied with the charming variations of landscape passing before their eyes; vying with each other in pointing out striking bits of scenery, to be remembered and sketched at leisure.

Rarely do people to whom it is undesirable to be seen together, set forth upon a ride or walk, whether across Stainmoor, or Dartmoor, or any other depopulated region, — that they are not met by a detachment of country neighbours, to whom the encounter affords an incident to be marvellously enlarged upon. The far from happy pair had not passed the lodge gates of the Abbey, before they were forced to quit the road for the turf, in order to make way for the outriders of the most censorious dowager in the county; and in the shadiest part of Mildenhurst Hanger, where the badness of the road compelled them to ride close and leisurely (and those who ride close and leisurely usually engage in earnest conversation,) who should appear, in a sudden turning of the road where the long ferns hung mingled with protruding roots of the stately pine trees; but Miss Hartwell, ambling on her pony by the side of her father; an old Colonel of the

Line on half pay, renowned as having caused three duels by his tale-bearing.

Compelled to rein up and parley, a thousand civil salutations were exchanged between them; which did not prevent Colonel Hartwell from observing to his daughter, as soon as they were out of sight and hearing, "Mr. Fanshawe has made rapid progress with Lord Mildenhall's handsome sister. Three days ago they were scarcely on bowing acquaintance!" Nor did the young lady fail to comment upon the fact in a letter addressed next day to her brother — a prating Captain in the household brigade. — *Tête-à-tête* detected in Mildenhurst Hanger was a great fact in a neighbourhood so unfrequented; and Miss Hartwell, already piqued at Fanshawe's precipitate departure from the Priory, took care that the story should lose nothing in her version.

Of such slight materials are concocted half the scandals that distract modern society! — A word more or less — a significant look more or less — in the relation of some equally harmless circumstance, has been known to sow irretrievable dissension between those whom God hath joined, and create irremediable heartbreak in many a happy home.

CHAPTER VIII.

La femme protestante, à l'extérieur discret, soumis, au langage mesuré, dont la coquetterie n'est trahie par aucune grâce extérieure, donne l'idée la plus austère du mariage sous cette forme. Une espèce de circonscription de la femme dans les devoirs de mère, empêche le développement de l'esprit de société. Il n'y a pas dans les pays protestants ce qu'on appelle esprit; ce mot rapide, qui étincelle, jété vivement et renvoyé de même. Les femmes protestantes dissertent comme dans leur prêche. Elles ne causent pas. — LA PRINCESSE GHICA.

HERBERT Fanshawe's project of a visit to Mildenhall Abbey, for the purpose of renewing his intimacy with the dignified Lady Hargreave, who appeared to have so little in common with his tender, timid Margaret of other days, — the slighted daughter of the ruined Dean, — had succeeded beyond his hopes — almost beyond his wishes. For there was more of curiosity than tenderness in his sentiments towards her. In hearts like his, the flame of early love deposits only dust and ashes, easily dispersed by the gales of active life. His plan for seeing her again had arisen spontaneously, on learning from the Hartwells that Lady Hargreave was staying in their neighbourhood. The bustling times we live in, with their express trains and electric telegraphs, are, in fact, too busy for deeply premeditated plotting. People sin upon impulse; but they do not, like our prosy fore-

fathers, approach a crime as their family mansion was approached, through a long tedious avenue, looking it stedfastly in the face.

When Fanshawe perceived with what culpable stupidity the Mildenhalls favoured his *tête-à-têtes* with his former love, he felt ashamed for them, and of himself. He had exceeded his original intentions by endeavouring to explain to his once-loved Margaret much that was really inexplicable; and the most eloquent of Solicitors-General could scarcely have attested his pleading by tears that appeared more genuine. But this was enough. He desired no more. He resolved to be wise in time. He would not be run away with, either by his feelings, or the vicious mare which his friend Mildenhall wanted to impose upon him. Sir Richard and William Mordaunt were expected on the Saturday evening. On Saturday morning, he would be off.

But, as has been just observed, in these days of general acceleration, the unforeseen generally predominates. On Friday afternoon, the husband and brother made their appearance by a fast train, in time to find him familiarly seated by the side of Lady Hargreave, under Queen Elizabeth's oak; entranced, as Leicester may have been on the same favoured spot, by the side of that favourite-favouring princess.

At first, the delinquent was nearly as much vexed, as William Mordaunt was startled. But the general

greeting that ensued was cordial enough to place him at ease; and Lord Mildenhall being, like most matter-of-fact country gentlemen, unrivalled at an explanation, Mr. Fanshawe's accidental visit to the Abbey was soon placed in the clearest light. The three friends of other days, if they met together by chance, were bound in decency to accept the meeting as a stroke of good fortune; and, strange to tell, the extension of their party rendered that evening the pleasantest which Fanshawe had yet spent at the Abbey.

Margaret seemed raised in importance by the affectionate homage of her husband and brother. Even the Mildenhalls were less stiff and unsocial under the influence of Sir Richard's simple-hearted good humour, and Mordaunt's reckless mockery. The latter, indeed, was as a boy out of school, like other men of eager temperament released from official duties. After coffee, the little party drew closer round the fire, and the vast saloon ceased to be gloomy as a catacomb. Following the fashion of railway travellers, the new comers had brought down a few new books: the last number (always the best) of one of Dickens's life-like stories, and the last number (always the bitterest) of the Westminster Review. William took up a paper-knife, to prepare it for his sister. "I own I never read reviews," observed Herbert Fanshawe disdainfully; "for the same reason that, in Russia, I never adopted the national custom of a snack ten minutes

before dinner: its piquancy spoils one's appetite for the more solid meal."

"The simile don't hold good, Fanshawe," retorted Mordaunt. "It may be compulsory on a man to go through three courses, but certainly not through three volumes; and I am thankful for a smart *résumé*, which, nine times in ten, supersedes all necessity for the effort. I read the Edinburgh and Quarterly as I do the *précis* of the debates; simply to spare time and trouble."

"The reviews, moreover, often save one the expense of purchasing some inferior work," added Lord Mildenhall, gravely.

"Listen to Mildenhall!" exclaimed his brother, laying down his paper-knife to clasp his hands in amazement. "He who, regarding new books, like new bread, as unwholesome food, buys nothing but a Bradshaw or an almanack! He who is supposed to be the identical peer of the realm convicted of citing the destruction of the Alexandrian Library as one of the greatest actions of antiquity! Nay, he is supposed to hold that the Bodleian and British Museum ought to be burned down, by act of parliament, once or twice in a century!"

"How can you say such things, William!" exclaimed Lady Mildenhall, as incapable of understanding a joke as a professor of mathematics. "I am certain your brother never proposed burning down

any thing! Few people have suffered more from incendiarianism than *we* have!"

A retort about setting the Thames on fire naturally suggested itself. But Fanshawe, whose cue it was to propitiate the heads of the family, sententiously observed that the opinion imputed to Lord Mildenhall, was, he confessed, in some degree his own. "We cannot expect our grandchildren," said he, "to learn all we are preparing for them, in addition to all we have learned in our time. The world has stifled itself by over-study of the past. By poring incessantly over books written chiefly because the authors have consulted other books as their authority, we become the copies of a copy. Miracles might have been accomplished by this time, if, instead of looking exclusively backward, men of genius had dared to look forward. What avail to you and I, for instance, the wars of Greece and Rome? To our age of transition and transaction they afford neither precedent nor example. Thanks to steam guns and minie rifles, *nous avons changé tout cela.*"

"You consider, then," retorted William Mordaunt ironically, "that if the Romans had not studied Greek, and that if Europe (that grand Republic of Sovereignities) had not learned its Latin grammar, we should at this moment be making tours in diving-bells and balloons, in two unexplored elements; instead of accom-

plishing our paltry fifty miles an hour, on vulgar *terra-firma?*"

"I consider that pedantry and bigotry kept philosophy out of play, or out of work, half a dozen centuries longer than was good for the greatest comfort of the greatest number," replied Fanshawe.

"I am often tempted to come to the same conclusion," observed Sir Richard, "when my clerk of the works at Dursley, snubs me with his seven orders of architecture. Why are my library windows to be measured out to me by Palladio or Vitruvius? Why am I, in foggy Britain, to adopt forms of decoration adapted to the sunny atmosphere of Greece? If the ruins of the ancient world had become dust like their originators, we should have been compelled to invent constructions, destined perhaps to surpass what we now worship as incomparable."

"The disease brings its own remedy," observed Herbert Fanshawe. "Having, by force of imitation, dwarfed our conceptions into insignificance, we produce nothing likely to command the imitation of future ages."

"No chef-d'œuvres, perhaps," replied Sir Richard. "But look at the average superiority of our works. — Look at our civil engineering. Look at the progress of the masses. Look at the wholesome improvements, moral and physical, with which the present century has endowed them!"

Lord Mildenhall shrugged his shoulders, muttering something about cures being still wanting for the potatoe-blight and the cholera; to which nobody listened but his wife.

"I am afraid the present century has abstracted more than it has supplied," said Herbert Fanshawe, anxious to keep up a conversation which enabled him to fix his eyes unnoticed on the beautiful woman seated opposite to him, bending over her tapestry work, half hidden by her husband's elbow-chair. "Society has lost its sociability — pleasure its elegance. The great game of politics has dwindled from the dignity of whist, into a boisterous game of ninepins. Literature is now a trade: art a speculation. Everybody is scrambling for his distinctions out of his sphere; and the diffusion of knowledge seems to have vulgarised rather than refined the public mind."

"Of that," argued Sir Richard gravely, "we are still unskilled to judge. We have planted the acorn — we see the sapling thriving. Our children's children can alone derive shelter from the perfect oak."

"Vide Sir Richard Hargreave's last speech at the Mechanics' Institute of R—!" cried William Mor-daunt, laughing. "And when your educated populace, my dear Dick, has succeeded in discovering a fifth-rate planet, or the animalculæ which form the parasites of the mite, or some gas, fouler than the foulest which pollutes the Thames, (instead of forging wills

or bank-notes as my brother Mildenhall fully anticipates), let my grand-nephews, in due gratitude, found and obtain a charter for a Monster-academy of arts and sciences, calculated to elevate the minds of swineherds, and refine the taste of ploughboys. Then, as Massinger says,

Then shall we see these vallant men of Britain
Like boding owls, creep into tods of ivy,

instead of wickedly fighting the French like their fathers, or burning the Pope in effigy like their grandfathers. What say you, Margaret? Shall your great grandson, in the twentieth century, construct a new residence at Dursley, setting Doric and Gothic, Lombardic — and Paxtonic, at defiance; — perhaps, who knows — out-Ninevehing the ground-plan of Nemrour's palace?" —

A sudden start and embarrassed pause, betrayed Lady Hargreave's total absence of mind. Accustomed to be present at the discussion of abstract questions between her husband, his cousin Ralph, and the erudite Virginia, in which she took no part and little interest, and (*contente d'ignorer bien des choses pour mieux comprendre le reste*) she had acquired the habit of seeming to listen, while retired into a world of her own. Of what she might now be thinking, it is needless to conjecture. But her husband, while he admired the conscious blushes overspreading her cheeks at having been detected in a reverie, felt thankful that

amongst the many transformations he had seen effected by late years, Margaret's simple nature was undisturbed by pretensions to dabble in administrative philosophy, or the *triste science* of setting the world to rights. As became her sex, she was willing to

Hope humbly still — with trembling pinions soar
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore :

leaving it to the presumptuous Lady Paramount of the Hargreave Lyceum, to dissert and assert, as if she regarded herself as the Apostle of a new Revelation; and to Lady Delavile, of Delavile Abbey, to analyse the votes of majorities, and canvass for converts.

"Margery finds us wretched company. Margery, like the judicious actress in Wilhelm Meister, has been enjoying a nap while we were prosing!" cried William, throwing down the book he was cutting, to take his sister's work out of her hand and place it in her netting case. "We must have a ride together to-morrow, darling," said he. "I dare say Mildenhall has a screw of some sort or other to lend me."

"There is the bay mare which Mr. Fanshawe has been trying," said the Viscountess, who seldom opened her lips; and then, only to give utterance to something she had better have kept to herself. "He rode it, I think, the day Margaret accompanied him to Castle Leeming."

"You have already been riding then?" inquired her brother, a little disappointed: for he had settled it

with Hargreave, on their way down, that Margaret must have been sadly bored during her stay at the Abbey; and that their arrival would afford the signal for her release from durance.

"Once. I rode for an hour or two last Saturday."

"With Mildenhall?"

"Anne hast just told you — with Mr. Fanshawe."

"You did not mention it when I asked you at dinner how you had been amusing yourself?"

"Perhaps because the ride did *not* amuse me," said she, having ascertained by a glance that Herbert Fanshawe and her husband were deeply engaged in argument. "To say the truth, I am so spoiled for riding, at Dursley, by my own perfect horse, that Reginald's stud does not exactly tempt me."

By this time, the Viscountess was waiting for her sister-in-law to retire to rest; so that there was no time for further explanations.

"How tiresome William is growing," drawled Lady Mildenhall, as they ascended together the half-lighted old oaken staircase; "and such shocking principles! Did you hear how he went on, to-night? — It would never surprise me to find him turn socialist, or red republican, or something dreadful of that kind."

"You must not take for earnest every reckless word uttered by my brother."

"God forbid! but I saw that gentlemanly, quiet, Mr. Fanshawe, positively horror-struck. He kept his

eyes fixed upon you, Margaret, as if expecting every moment you would break out and silence your brother. It is really a comfort that the Duchess did not dine with us, as I invited her, to-day. *She* is not used to that sort of debating-society conversation, and might perhaps have taken it amiss."

On Sir Richard, on the other hand, the impression made by Fanshawe's mild and prepossessing manners, was equally satisfactory. Alone with Margaret, he expressed himself strongly in favour of his quondam friend.

"The schooling of the world has done wonders for Fanshawe," said he. "And how wrong one is, Margaret, (according to one of Ralph Hargreave's favourite phrases), to decide upon the manufactured article from the raw material. When Fanshawe had his fortune to make, I fancied him an *intrigant*. Now he has accomplished his purpose, he seems as simple as a child!"

Margaret could not say "Amen." It was not for her, however, to remind her wiser husband that *ars est celare artem*; and that the man of the world might find it expedient to wear a closer fitting mask than the jactant Oxonian.

"I believe, after all, that my dislike to him in former days, arose from a mistaken notion that you cared about him," said the open-hearted Sir Richard; "for I began to tolerate him, Margaret, the moment

you took me to your heart. By the way, I have found out what carries him so often to Morton Castle. There is a lady in the case. There is something of engagement between him and Lady Emily: and she and the dowager usually spend the winter, you know, with Fitzmorton."

"Lady Emily must be much older than Mr. Fanshawe," said Margaret gravely, "Lady Emily has been out these ten years."

"That would bring her only to seven-and-twenty. But my father, as you may remember, was wild that she should become Lady Emily Hargreave; and Herbert Fanshawe is six months older than I. — His travels in the East with Fitzmorton, originated, perhaps, in this clandestine attachment."

"Scarcely, I should think."

"Fanshawe hinted as much to me, however, just now, when we were alone in the billiard-room. He owned it was an affair of the heart which brings him into our county."

At that moment, Lady Hargreave might be pardoned for thinking that excess of *bonhomie* is sometimes a failing; that, in the times we live in, want of tact may become a dangerous deficiency.

"I begged him to come and see us the first time he is in our neighbourhood," added Sir Richard, benignly. "Sir Claude was an intimate friend of my father's; and Herbert himself a frequent guest at Dursley. It

would have seemed inhospitable, when he was talking so frankly about Morton Castle, to abstain from inviting him."

Margaret's answer was faint and cold.

"Well, don't make yourself unhappy, if his company is disagreeable to you. There will be time enough to think about it," added her husband. "For a year to come, Dursley will be in no state to receive visitors."

And this time, Lady Hargreave indulged in a very audible "Amen."

On the day following, and the next — and the next — the weather favoured, beyond their hopes, William Mordaunt's projects of holiday-making.

In spite of the depreciated character of Lord Mildenhall's stables, they made up several pleasant riding parties. The Viscount, who had great confidence in his rich brother-in-law's aptitude for business, found it convenient to join them — to have the benefit of his opinion concerning the lands he was draining, the woodlands he was clearing, the farms he was building: and as he contrived to engross Sir Richard's attention on these subjects throughout the greater part of their ride, and William was condemned to the younger brother's portion of the slowest horse, Margaret was left nearly as much alone with Herbert Fanshawe, as if the Hartwells and the Dowager-duchess had been again on the look out.

"It really seems more than accident that this fellow

should be perpetually whispering into her ear," muttered William, as he spurred his sorry jade to rejoin them in a picturesque clearing, where the wood-cutters were still at work, "Dick Hargreave ought to see that it is wrong, — Margaret ought to feel that it is wrong. But God bless them both, *they* are too good to imagine evil! I should do more harm than good if I risked a word of warning to my sister. A woman's mind should not be familiarised with even the suspicion of evil. Many would have remained insensible, it is said, to the existence of Love, had they never heard mention of the name. For my part, I am convinced that many a virtuous woman has been taunted into levity by finding herself an object of suspicion."

CHAPTER IX.

Chaque année qui passe sur notre tête dessèche dans notre cœur quelque beau sentiment, y tarit quelque noble source. Mais l'égoïsme s'épanouit au souffle du temps, et se prélassé plus radieux et plus florissant sur les débris souillés de l'âme. — SANDEAU.

THE following season, Lady Hargreave found herself forced into London society by causes wholly foreign to her inclination. The project of the Great Exhibition had just been made public; and Ralph Hargreave, who, as representative of one of our most important manufacturing districts, was entering heart and soul into the plan, spared no pains to enlist the co-operation of his wealthier cousin. Both the manufacturer and the baronet subscribed largely with their purses; both afforded sterling assistance by counsels; and the house in Whitehall Gardens soon became a favourite rendezvous of present benefactors and future exhibitors.

Once roused to perceive the advantages of the gigantic scheme, as a vast stride accomplished in the civilization of the world, Sir Richard became an enthusiastic partizan. — Sir Hurst Clitheroe, moderately charmed at finding himself compelled to contribute to a fund which was not to return him so much as five-eighths of a farthing per cent., was amazed to find

with what ardour his phlegmatic brother-in-law embraced so gratuitous a project.

Lady Hargreave, as was her duty, seconded his views. Contrary to the suggestions of her reserved nature, she even became a solicitress in the cause. She canvassed her tradespeople — she canvassed her friends, — and while the fine library in Whitehall Gardens was thronged with people seeking from the calmer faculties of Sir Richard, information which the restless Ralph was too much occupied to afford, Lady Hargreave was mildly endeavouring to convert the dissidents of her own sex; who were already active in foretelling evil consequences from so prodigious an innovation — an innovation which threatened for a time to withdraw public attention from their fair selves.

“The very nature of my sister-in-law seems altered,” observed Lady Arthur, who, finding her train of suitors diminish as soon as the fountain-head of the late Sir Thomas’s claret and Sillery was dried up, has resumed her previous demureness and was now precision personified. “She, whom poor Richard could never persuade to show common civility to her country neighbours, or maintain our family influence at R—, is now as busy about this foolish wasteful Vanity Fair, as if she pretended to a first class medal.”

“Very natural, very natural! Sir Richard, like all other democratic advocates of progress, is a propa-

gandist of the Crystal Palace faith," observed old Colonel Hartwell, chuckling; "and my Lady says ditto to Sir Richard."

"It is the first time, however, that any one ever saw the Dean's daughter sacrifice her opinions and tastes to those of her husband," retorted Barty Tomlinson, who was, as usual, eavesdropping. "If I were a married man, nothing would alarm me more than the sudden conversion of my wife from independence to servility."

As soon as Lady Arthur O'Brennan, to whom this asp-like suggestion was addressed, was out of hearing, Tomlinson proceeded to add — "Lady Hargreave, with all her primness, finds her account in the Exhibition mania. Georges Dandin, forsooth, is to be on a committee; and it must be like the removal of the Great Globe itself from the shoulders of Atlas, to throw off for so many hours a day, the company of that heavy fellow! When talking to Dick Hargreave (a hybrid mulish compound of Fourierist and country gentleman) one feels as if locked into a vault full of inflammable gas, likely to explode with the first light introduced into it."

"You have a lively imagination, Sir," said Colonel Hartwell stiffly. "I grant you there may, perhaps, be something too much of the ideologist in Sir Richard Hargreave. But a man possessing in the country a stake of between forty and fifty thousand a year, is

entitled, do you see, Sir, to deal in what ideas he thinks proper."

It was nothing new for Tomlinson to be snubbed by certain elders of the people whose names figure in the roll of Doomsday Book as well as of Burke's Landed Gentry. But in the long run, the country gentlemen got the worst of it. Bickering with the little backbiter, whose weapons were always ready sharpened for use, was playing with edged tools.

He was, however, so far justified in his remarks upon Lady Hargreave's altered habits, that sudden changes, whether in man or woman, are usually suspicious. Unwonted restlessness is often the result of latent bodily disease: unwonted lassitude, of latent disease of the mind. We bring into this world germs of undeveloped frailty, which accidental stimulants quicken into mischief. Unless where the soul's atmosphere is regulated to temperate heat by the steady influence of Religion, weeds may, at any hour, spring up, and choke for ever the better product of the soil.

Margaret, though honestly despising the hollow aspirings of her sisters-in-law, who, instead of cultivating a single real enjoyment, cared only for the impression made by their *seeming* enjoyments on such people as Tomlinson, the Gwendover Horribows, or Mrs. Brampton Brylls Margaret herself was far from insensible to the charm of flattery. She had enjoyed but little of it. Her girlhood had been embittered by Lady Mili-

cent's malignity. William, dearly as he loved her, had made it a point of conscience to deal impartially with her faults. Her husband, above all, was too conscious of the profoundness of his love, to think it necessary to wear it on the surface.

But the cravings of female nature after adulation, however long suppressed, are never extinguished. As in a factitious atmosphere, some moss-grown tree will suddenly burst into blossom, no sooner did the quiet domestic woman, so little familiar to the staring eye of what is called the world, emerge into the glare of fashionable day, than the acclamations by which her advent was saluted, brought this secret sin into efflorescence.

Her beauty, enhanced by so much simplicity of manners and serenity of character, recommended her to universal admiration. "Who is this Lady Hargreave," cried the idlers, "that she has hitherto profited so little by her rare advantages? Even in her own county, one never heard of her!" — (Happy man! whose wife is never heard of.) "Even among the snobs, she does not appear to have established a *clique*. Yet she enjoys full liberty of action. Her husband does not seem inclined to immure her. Barty Tomlinson tells me that Sir Richard is far more interested in the condition of the million, than in the one of a million whom he has the happiness to call his wife."

A host of adorers hastened to present themselves as the body-guard of the new beauty. For, as Alphonse Karr has pithily observed, "it is easier to adore a woman than to love her. *Avec de l'imagination et des obstacles, on peut toujours adorer une femme. Il n'est pas aussi facile de l'aimer. On n'adore la plupart des femmes, que faute de les pouvoir aimer.*" To which axiom a female philosopher would have superadded, that there is no danger for a woman in being adored; but, that to be loved, is fatal. Real love is so rare, that the danger is luckily unfrequent. But counterfeits are abroad; and feminine vanity is apt to accept the false Florizel for the true. While Lady Hargreave was inditing circulars, organizing meetings, and presiding at select committees of fine ladies, who monstered their nothings and promulgated their utilitarian doctrines with the most futilitarian grace, Fanshawe was "close at the ear of Eve, officiating as her secretary — as her counsellor — as her friend. Sir Richard was thankful to him for his services. Fanshawe was not a man of sufficient stamina to march with those who had undertaken to bear that gigantic structure aloft on their shoulders. But his conciliating manners made him a useful instrument in many quarters, where strength of intellect, activity of mind was superfluous. The time and attention of William Mordaunt being already bespoken for one of the most important branches of the scheme, it was essential for Margaret to

insure the support of some safe and active aide-de-camp.

No man on earth could be better fitted for the office. No man had his senses and faculties more completely under control. No man united so much superficial refinement with so artful an imitation of nature. The highest triumph of an actor or singer is to accomplish spontaneity: the power of speaking, as if out of the abundance of the heart, — of singing, as the bird sings, from instinctive impulse. — This, Herbert Fanshawe had achieved. He was the most consummate of mimes; the master of every situation. In a word, he was eminently qualified to glide, hand in hand with D'Altavilla, on golden skaits, over the frozen surface of fashionable life.

Having discovered with the microscopic eye of a practised observer the one weak point in the character of the Dean's daughter, it was easy to follow up his advantage by a system of adulation, both expressed and implied. Open compliment would have disgusted her; but she was not above being informed by Herbert Fanshawe how earnestly her presence was ambitioned in that higher sphere of society, by birthright her own, had she not forfeited caste by marrying a *novus homo*. Unaccustomed, on the other hand, to find her dress circumstantially noted, her movements watched, her words applauded, it was more soothing than salutary to listen to the echoed applause of society brought back

by a carrier-dove, who never failed to appear before her with an olive-branch in his mouth.

How different from the contentious arguings of Ralph Hargreave — the rough exhortations of her brother — the spites of her sisters-in-law — the djereed-like warfare of Barty Tomlinson — was the polished graciousness of the visitor who supplied her with daily tributes of worship from his club-mates, and praise from his colleagues. He seemed to have instituted himself collector-general of applause; and was master, of that ricochet system of the art of compliment, which praises one by dispraise of another. — Amazing what a weight of censure Lady Arthur, and poor Lady Delavile were made to bear, in order that Margaret might find herself faultless.

“I have a message to you from Lady Delavile, dear Lady Hargreave,” said he, one morning, when he visited Whitehall Gardens on pretence of bringing the last number of the Charivari, containing a clever skit on the Great Exhibition, as yet unprovided with the charming plan of its Crystal Palace, to which much of its eventual triumph is owing. “But it is really not worth delivering. Lady Delavile is a woman who would keep half the telegraphs in the universe at work, to waft her nonsense from Indus to the Pole. Never was peeress so fussy! Never did the matron of a parish-union hold forth in her vocation as her ladyship for this bazaar of bazaars, which would get on quite

as well if she restricted herself to her usual futile avocations. If she would but take a lesson from those who allow the grand engine to work its own wonders, content to cheer it in its progress!"

"I should have predicted that Lady Delavile, with her extensive private interests and family connexions to keep up — would have proved a far less zealous advocate that we have found her."

"Less zealous? Under certain excitements, Lady Delavile becomes as active as an armadillo. She has taken it into her empty head to 'agitate' in this highly interesting business, is a piece of excellent courtiership. Do you remember Madame Hamelin's retort when one of her visitors praised the beauty of Napoleon's hands — '*De grace, ne parlons pas politique.*' I long to make the same reply to Lady Delavile, when I find her over-hurrying herself about our grand project; running round and round like a-squirrel in her miserable little wheel, and fancying she is making the circuit of the universe."

"Still, if no one stirred, — if each of us waited for our neighbours to exert themselves, — what chance of progress?"

"But why not do as *you* have done, dear Lady Hargreave, the duties within your scope, without interrupting other people by stretching over them to snatch at objects beyond your province? The planets move in their orbits so steadily, that we have assigned

chimeric music to their spheres. Or, should you think that simile too ambitious for the fine ladies of May Fair, — let Lady Delaville look at the nearest ant-hill, (if so homely an object is to be found within the park-palings of Delaville Abbey), and she will see that order is preserved among pismires as among railway-trains, by the advancing column taking one side and the receding another. If the busy emmets were, like her busy ladyship, to be perpetually running hither and thither, backwards and forwards, molesting their fellow-emmets, and disturbing the whole community," —

"*Well?*" — inquired Margaret, with a smile, perceiving that he paused for breath —

"Well! that species of confusion would come to pass, which the slang of Barty Tomlinson graphically describes as Immortal Smash."

"And what would that matter to Lady Delaville?" rejoined Lady Hargreave. "Confusion is her element."

"Most true. If Chaos could come again, I should expect to see her riding in the whirlwind, and directing the storm. Ah! could she — could she — but imagine the refreshment to human nature of finding itself at rest in a quiet drawing-room like this, where it is not necessary to obtain a hearing by rattling out one's words like the Hailstone Chorus!"

How was Lady Hargreave to be otherwise than pleased by a tribute to the tranquillity of her pleasant rooms; which, secure by position from the tumult of

"street-pacing steeds," were converted by her love of flowers into rivalry with the country. Even, if less charmingly inhabited, they would have formed an attractive lounge. But she was not insensible to the preference accorded to them, over Lady Delaville's stately mansion in Grosvenor Square, supreme in aristocratic magnificence, and the resort of the leading men of the day. If she envied any one, indeed, it was Lady Delaville; whose brilliancy, beholding her merged in a nucleus of wits and politicians, she was disposed to mistake for that of a star of the first magnitude. On this point, Fanshawe, who carried in his mind an appraised catalogue of the influences of London, as definitive as the Court Guide, or Dod's Parliamentary Companion, was at some pains to undeceive her.

"You fall into the mistake of supposing that Alexander's empire — that of Holland House — has been divided; and that Lady Delaville succeeds to a kingdom. — A mistake altogether! To represent even a fraction of that dismembered sovereignty, requires integral merit, in which, I fear, Lady Delaville is deficient. In the first place, she is, as far as I know, a strictly honest woman; — good wife, good mother, good mistress of a family; — whereas it is chiefly women expropriated by their own sex, who assume, with advantage, the attributes of ours. In the second, she is as grossly ignorant as most high-born highly-educated English ladies. Were she the Aspasia she fancies her-

self, she would rest contented with the enjoyment of her husband's splendid fortune, and the power of dispensing to others the blessings comprised in its administration. Lady Delavile is not a Virginia Hargreave, born to Utopia-ise over a Bostonian tea-table, concerning triumphs to be achieved, and the civilization to be accomplished by uplifting the good right-hand from which the flour of corn-cake and pumpkin-pie-making, is just brushed off. Lady Delavile, if she knows anything, is aware that in the English world she is a cypher powerless as Prospero's broken wand. This is not the century for an Abigail Hill, or a Sarah Jennings to tyrannise over the world. Princess L— was lucky to have enthroned herself in London during the first half of the 19th century; for, trust me, the *femme politique* is now as obsolete among us as a hoop petticoat and lappets."

"Your wish is father to the thought," said Lady Hargreave, smiling.

"On the contrary. Entertaining the usual desire of the foul sex to catch the fair one at a disadvantage, nothing pleases me better than to find them swimming out of their depth. In my opinion, Lady Delavile with her 'private and confidential' notes, and her little mannikin of a henchman running about all day to pick up early intelligence, and return to her like a cur with a bone in its mouth, is quite as ridiculous as Hercules with his distaff."

"No one thinks Lady Delaville ridiculous. Look at her influence in society!"

"Her influence with whom? Dotards and hobbledehoys. *Men* despise her. The greatest statesman of recent times chose for his wife a beautiful woman, remarkable for her total indifference to party interests. A public man as little desires to find a *femme politique* by his fireside, as a hero, an Amazon; — which is one among the many thousand causes that render these halcyon waters, (he glanced from the window as he spoke at a fleet of colliers moored on the opposite shore, and a host of penny steamers crossing each other on the river), dearer than all the rivers of Damascus."

"I find no fault with them," replied Margaret. "But even the rivers of Damascus, (you probably mean the rivers of Israel?) may be improved by an enlivening ripple —"

"No, no! I will not hear you say it. May they remain smooth and glassy, to reflect the spotless swan which swims double — swan and shadow — on their surface. Leave agitation, leave the vulgar clash of politics, to the fair Virginia, — half-muse, half-chambermaid, — '*halb göttlich und halb schweinisch*.' 'T is her vocation! In a new country, every engine must be set in motion to 'make the rough places plain.' But here, in the Paradise of civilization, Woman's mission

is to be Womana: being created to double the beauties of the Garden of Eden, and perfect the felicity of her mate."

Alas! was it fated that this more than serpent should poison the ear of a hitherto untempted Eve! —

CHAPTER X.

Ceux qui ne sont pas hypocrites avec les autres, le sont quelquefois avec eux-mêmes. Nous rusons avec notre conscience. Nous avons pour la tromper mille roureries dans notre sac. Nous sommes sans cesse occupés à jeter des petits gâteaux à ce Cerbère qui veille à la porte de notre cœur. — MADELEINE.

THE league between Lady Clitheroe and Lady Arthur, against their sister-in-law, was becoming offensive and defensive as that between the proud sisters of Cinderella against the patient Grizel of fairy lore. Though neither of them had at any time found much enjoyment in her society, no sooner was it eagerly sought by the *beau monde*, than they began to find themselves injured by the coolness existing between them.

Originally good-natured and tolerant, they had undergone the usual transformation operated by the wear and tear of London life upon empty and narrow hearts; and were becoming not only envious, but vindictive.

A dislike in common — a jealousy in common, — brought them closer together than they had found themselves since their Dursley spinsterhood. Lady Arthur forgave in Emma her superiority of wealth — Lady Clitheroe in Julia her priority of precedence, —

that they might mutually declaim against the estrangement which they taxed the Dean's daughter with having created between them and their brother; towards whom, God wot, they had never cherished one really sisterly sentiment.

"We are like guests — like strangers — in Whitehall Gardens," said Lady Arthur to Julia. "I never go there without feeling myself thoroughly *de trop*."

"One can never get a word with Lady Hargreave alone. — Always surrounded by her satellites! — First, you have William Mordaunt — that cut-and-dry specimen of a treasury clerk, with his second-best coat and umbrella, when the weather is cloudy. Then *la Corinne manquée* — that odious Mrs. Ralph — always full of abolition meetings, sanatory commissions, prison discipline, pauperism, Heaven knows what! She reminds me of a little Skye terrier perpetually scratching up stones. Even poor old Aunt Martha could not stand such a fretful porcupine, by way of drawing-room pet. It ended with her being absolutely exiled from Bardsel."

"You have omitted one of the satellites, my dear Julia! Though the others are welcomed so familiarly perhaps, only as a cover to his visits."

"Herbert Fanshawe? — True! — That man is never out of the house. And poor Margaret has not the wit to perceive that he goes there only for the chance of meeting Lady Delavile."

"Lady Delavile? Absurd! Forty-three, with two married daughters."

"Not absurd, — because still one of the handsomest women in London, and by far the most influential. I would rather belong to Lady Delavile's set than be a lady of the bed-chamber."

"*Tous les goûts sont respectables!* But I don't believe that yours and Herbert Fanshawe's have, in this respect, the smallest analogy. *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours:* and I am much mistaken if Fanshawe have not retraced his steps to his *belle passion* of the year eighteen hundred and forty no matter what!"

"Margaret? — It is now my turn to cry absurd! — Do you suppose that a man like Fanshawe — so sought, so caressed, so over-rated, whom Lady Emily Morton is straining every nerve to catch, and three parts of whose heart and soul are embarked in political life — would trouble himself with the heavy courtship of a prude like Lady Hargreave; whose dullness is, as much her protection, as the leaden medal stuck into the hat of Louis XI. And then," said Lady Arthur demurely, suddenly calling to mind that she was a Bishop's widow, albeit an Irish one, "and then, consider her duty towards my brother — consider all she owes him. Consider how he picked her out of the dirt — provided for her family — cared

for her comfort, ay! as Sir Hurst Clitheroe may have cared for yours." —

"Too true! — which makes it the more scandalous that she should encourage Mr. Fanshawe as she certainly does."

"She takes care that *we* shall never perceive it. I have been asked to dine in Whitehall Gardens only twice this season; and then, to meet, — guess whom?"

"The Ralph Hargreaves, or some other of those Bardsel nuisances, whom Margaret has dragged out of the shade."

"Worse still. Old Dursley country neighbours; whom since I married I have been labouring to keep out of my visiting list, and drive from my memory. Think of having to sit next to Mr. Brampton Brylls, and opposite his mother, arrayed in that sempiternal old chocolate satin gown, which constituted her coronation robes when I was a child."

"What an impertinence on the part of Margaret. Or was it want of tact? Does she ignore or overlook what is due to the sister-in-law of the Marquis of Castle Glynnon?"

Julia was a little puzzled to determine whether her sister spoke indignantly or ironically.

"Marquis or no Marquis," said she, tartly, "every one has his *quant à soi*: and is bound to make it respected. The consequence is that I have just sent an

excuse to a dinner party to which Lady Hargreave has invited me for the 25th."

"I thought you were on intimate terms with Lady Emily Morton and her mother?"

"Well?"

"The Fitzmortons dine in Whitehall Gardens on the 25th."

"Are you certain?"

"Lord Fitzmorton asked me last night coming out of the opera, whether he was to meet us in Whitehall Gardens, on the 25th. Between him and my husband, you know, there exist certain political relations. As member for R—, Sir Hurst is brought into frequent correspondence with the Lord Lieutenant of the county."

"By means of circulars," was Julia's unuttered reflection. She contented herself with asking aloud whether her sister was of the party on the 25th.

"Yes. We accepted — which I am now sorry for. I don't care to meet the Fitzmortons. Lady Emily is too sarcastic for me. I was in hopes the dinner was made for the Delaviles; who are just now in such close intercourse with my brother on account of this monster nuisance. — this horrible Exhibition. We seldom meet now; and Lady Delavile is a valuable acquaintance."

"*C'est selon.* I should have thought that between Lady Delavile and Sir Hurst there must be downright

antipathy. So violent a conservative, doubtless, regards your husband as a dangerous radical, and labels him *poison*."

Lady Clitheroe was about to launch into one of the manifestoes she kept at her tongue's end, for occasions when the loyalty of Sir Hurst Clitheroe was impugned; setting forth, in turgid prose, his attachment to the constitution and institutions of his native country. But, knowing that Julia was cognizant of certain little raws, — certain imprudent after-dinner speeches of the busy knight at public meetings and in election skirmishes, she thought it wise to revert to Lady Delavile.

"It is not simply on her own account, one cares for Lady Delavile's notice," said she. "But she and those five or six sisters, who knot together and create a crowd in every London party, are dangerous enemies. Impossible to look more benignly insolent than those 'fat, fair, and foolish' women; each of whom, by assigning a Christian name to some pet folly, continues to make it pass for a virtue. — Lady Winchcomb, for instance, fancies that, because she attires her coquetry in the dress of a charity girl, it is no longer Coquetry!"

"A worldly set, I grant you; and as plausible as worldly. Still, Lady Delavile is an authority to be conciliated, and I cannot blame Margaret for cultivating her acquaintance. Only I ask leave to remain con-

vinced that there is no more project in her innocent intimacy with Berkeley Square, than in mine with Esther Pilbrowe and her gouty Canon."

"And you believe, too, that Mr. Fanshawe has no ulterior views in his growing intimacy with the Delaviles?"

"I never thought of *him* in connexion with the affair."

"Then you are perhaps the only person of my acquaintance who has *not*. All sorts of unpleasant hints have reached me, —"

"From such people as Spy Tomlinson. —"

"Such people as Spy Tomlinson create the news of society. They are the *nouvelles à la main* of an epoch which is *blasé* with printer's ink. No one reads who can listen: or why should all these lords go lecturing *viva voce* about the country? —"

"Granted, then, that Tomlinson is established as an authority — what has the oracle pronounced?"

"That Lady Hargreave — that my brother — are rendered mere stepping-stones by Herbert Fanshawe; that he is as great an intrigant as Sir Claude; and that, being fifty times cleverer, he is a hundred times more dangerous."

"I can't fancy him much of an *intrigant*. He is so insolent — so fond of his ease — so complete an epicurean: one of those who wait for the tide of fortune to roll a treasure to their feet."

"Having previously carefully calculated and provided for its flux and reflux. Nay, he not only calculates for himself, but for his friends. Tomlinson declares that it was Fanshawe who apprised Altavilla of the meagre nature of your fortune; and suggested to him the use of wings, which were any thing but the wings of Cupid."

"How often must I assure you, Emma, that there never was more between me and Altavilla than between yourself and Herbert Fanshawe, at Dursley, a dozen years ago; — a mere flirtation — from which both parties were at liberty to recede."

"I am glad to hear you say so. The question now, however, is to keep our eyes on Lady Hargreave. Ah! Julia, dear! When poor Lord Arthur indulged in that unusual burst of eloquence at your wedding *déjeuner*, and recommended Richard to ally himself with some family of which all the sons were brave, and all the daughters virtuous, how was one to suppose he would pick out for a brother-in-law a sneak like William Mordaunt; or, for a wife, a smooth-faced hypocrite, like Margaret!"

A grave accusation this. But *was* William Mordaunt a sneak? Was he wilfully or stupidly blind to the fact, that over the unoccupied mind of his sister, Fanshawe was obtaining a dangerous ascendancy? Alas! engrossed like all the world, just then, by a predominant idea; he thought only of his committee. At the close

of the season, he was to proceed to the continent to negotiate with foreign artists and artizans; and was far too busy with vocabularies and Henschel, — patent leathern railway bags and Macintoshed travelling caps, to be an active sentinel in Whitehall. By the seeming frankness with which Fanshawe pleaded guilty to a hopeless attachment for Lady Emily Morton, he was thrown completely off his guard; and Sir Richard himself was not more blind to the perils with which Margaret was environed, than the brother who would have seen her dead at his feet, rather than disgraced. Virginia Hargreave, though in some respects a ludicrous parody upon ancient heroism and modern refinement, was, he thought a safe companion for her; — being, like the majority of her countrywomen, as chaste in mind and feeling as she was careless of conventional forms.

William consequently quitted London for his continental tour at the close of the season, with as little anxiety as if he had left Lady Hargreave where her diamonds were deposited, in Lombardstreet, in a banker's strong room in a double Chubbed fireproof iron chest. As he bestowed his farewell kisses on his little nephew and niece, and talked to them about the pleasures they were about to enjoy in the green valleys of Dursley, while he should be ploughing the dusty roads of Italy, he considered his sister Margaret as honestly devoted to the enjoyment of rural pleasures, as either Mary or Bill.

Let us hope — nay, let us be sure that there was no blameable *arrière pensée* in the reserve which prevented Lady Hargreave from acquainting him, when they parted at the South Eastern Station ere he started by the Dover mail, that it was at Oak Hill and *not* at Dursley, she and her children were about to refresh themselves after the flurry of the London season. Probably she felt mortified at having to intimate to her brother that Sir Richard would not hear of her returning home till scaffold-poles and plasterers' pails had disappeared. *He* was obliged to be there, he said. But there could be no occasion to torment his wife and children with the ill odours of size and varnish.

While William, therefore, was skimming the channel in a screw-steamer, preparatory to skimming in a few hours that dreary road to Paris, which formerly wasted as many days in listening to the *sacrébleus* of club-tailed postillions, of whom him of Longjumeau at the Opéra Comique alone remains the type, Margaret was enjoying the *dolce far* much more than *nientes* of yachting life, which awaited her among the fragrant groves of Oak Hill.

Sir Richard was off to his work-people; not sorry to escape for a time the company of one whose interest in his occupations was as cold as Ralph Hargreave's acceptance of Lady Delaville's ridiculous theories concerning Colonization and Poor Law Bastilles. And once reinstated amidst the mechanics and artists

employed to render his country-house what no country-house ought to be — a palace — he forgot that it was the month of August; and that the little Nautilus, the pearl of the Solent, was afloat on the waters.

The Delaviles were to be her guests for a week or two. He had planned it so. Not to impose a restraint upon his wife during his absence. Of that, Sir Richard — still and always Dick Hargreave — was as incapable as of any other ungenerous action. But he fancied that the company of so stirring a woman as Lady Delavile, would amuse and rouse her: having discovered in Margaret a tendency to *ennui*, which, it is said by sophists, to be inherent in human nature. But the sophists may be wrong. And whenever we discern symptoms of what is called *ennui* in those dearest to us — let us look to it! Variegation in the leaves of a shrub, denotes that there is disease in the pith or fibres. Unnatural listlessness is as much a symptom of unnatural excitement at the core, as the behind-time of a watch of latent irregularity in the works.

Sir Richard Hargreave would scarcely, however, have taxed poor Margaret with being a victim to *ennui*, had he seen her a few days after her arrival at Oak Hill. The place to which, since his accession to the throne of Hargreavedom he had done wonders, simply by removing every improvement effected by his predecessor, and supplying its shrubberies with the

choice trees which amended horticulture has encouraged us to entrust to the mild usage of our southernmost latitudes, was looking wonderfully beautiful: its noble daturas displaying their trumpet-like blossoms as white as snow amidst masses of bright blue salvia: while the autumnal acacia put forth its blush-coloured bunches, and the broad and sheltering foliage of the catalpa was crested with bloom.

But it was less the vegetation of the spot than the transparency of its atmosphere, and pleasant ripple of its waters, that endowed it with so bewitching a charm. Betwixt towering cypresses with whose spires climbing roses had been trained to intermingle, betwixt spreading branches of cork trees, and pale thickets of ilex, was seen that "shining river" which does not, perhaps, ere it reach the sea, "seek Ella's bower to give her the wreaths" flung into its waters by a poet; but which certainly affords an exquisite object to the villas and castelets of Cowes.

To Lady Delaville who arrived almost simultaneously with her hostess, the scene was new. The yacht squadron riding with its snow-white sails on the glassy waves of the Solent, like a newly-alighted flight of lightsome sea-birds, pluming themselves in the sun, created a marine picture of real and specific beauty. No other land attaches a similar fringe to the glorious robes of grim old Ocean; and she was never weary of watching the changes of the river from molten silver

to crysophrase, emerald, sapphire, — as the temper of the clouds, or caprice of the winds, agitated its varied complexion.

“Never was a spot susceptible of such entire changes of scenery and decorations, as the play-bills have it,” said she, after surveying the lovely view through her double-glasses, as she would have admired a new opera. “Every five minutes, those restless yachts present a completely new picture. Always, some graceful schooner putting up its sails, or some daring cutter gliding back from her cruise, into still waters; or some yawl defying them both in old-fashioned independence like a country gentleman bundling his way into Boodle’s. Then the boats. — The water seems alive to-day. And what neatness in their trim crews what clockwork regularity in the stroke of their oars! —”

“I am truly sorry that Sir Richard is absent, dear Lady Delaville,” said Margaret, charmed with her enthusiasm; “he is as proud of his Nautilus, which was built according to his own fancies, years before he married, as of the discipline of his men.”

“Which is the Nautilus, my dear?” interrupted the lady, “Oh! the little schooner yonder, at her moorings. I had not noticed her before. I was looking at the Xarifa and the Arrow. Sir Richard, proud of his yacht? You surprise me — I had not supposed him capable of being proud of anything. Of all

my acquaintance, I know no man who accepts, with such stoical complacency the advantages showered upon him by providence. Some men seem to fancy themselves heirs intail to the best blessings of this world. — Lord Delavile, my dear! Have I not often called Sir Richard Hargreave, Sir Diogenes? Do I not sometimes say that if a diamond mine turned up on his estate, he would say to his bailiff with undisturbed countenance — ‘Ascertain that we have a right to work it. It probably belongs to the crown.’”

Lord Delavile, thus appealed to, did not find it convenient to raise his eyes from the newspaper in his hand; though, as it was only the supplement to the Times, his attention was not likely to be very deeply absorbed. But he was too much accustomed to her ladyship's incongruities of speech, to say nothing of her caprices of mind, not to believe it probable that, while affecting to compliment, she was endeavouring to wound: and *he* was one of those who speak the truth — and nothing but the truth — a merit rarer than it ought to be among the golden spurs of modern chivalry.

Lord Delavile belonged indeed to that high caste of nobility, in which good breeding appears innate. Lord Mildenhall was his superior in date by half a century: in distinction, his inferior by ages. The blood of both ran down to them from Magna Charta. But in one case it appeared to have flowed through a

tile-drain, impoverished by washy intermixture, and corrupted by earthy particles; in the other, through noble canals and over stately aqueducts; for the nature of the two men was as different as clay from marble. Into whatever position of life Lord Delavile might be thrown, the English gentleman was apparent, like the radiance of Bramah in an avatar. In his hunting-coat and tops, at the covert side, — in a wide-awake and wrap-rascal, struggling with chaw-bacons at an agricultural show, — or in his peer's-robcs at a coronation pageant, — the stamp of distinction was equally apparent. Nor was there a speck of dirt upon Lord Delavile's nature, more than on the spotless coat of an ermine.

By Lady Delavile's manœuvres and stratagems indeed, he had been more than once involved in social embarrassments hateful to a man of high honour. But he had borne all with wonderful temper; regarding her mental defects with the same indulgence he would have shown the wife of his bosom if stricken with blindness, deafness, lameness, or any other physical infirmity. He had taken her for better, for worse; and though she proved considerably worse than there was any reason to predict when she appeared in her orange flowers and Brussels lace at the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square, he had remained a model of forbearance.

Cognizant of her varying moods, as a showman of

the treacherous antics of his monkey, he saw that, on her arrival at Oak Hill, fair and pleasant as it was, Lady Delavile was thwarted and disappointed. But he did not waste his time in disentangling the perplexed skein. It might be that some new yachting dress had not been sent home in time for the expedition. It might be that she had received unfavourable news of two Irish elections that were in progress. It might be that her application to Lord Palmerston for a consulship at Ning Po, for the nephew of her groom of the chambers, had not received the instant attention to which she felt herself entitled. It might be that intelligence had arrived from Italy of Altavilla's approaching return, after she had exhibited a painfully exact daguerreotypic likeness of him, the moment his back was turned. But even he — Lord Delavile — though married to her for seven-and-twenty years, knew her not well enough to surmise that she had been meditating the conversion of Ralph Hargreave, the radical; and that she was inexpressibly vexed at his absence. She seemed to have imagined, when she accepted the invitation to Oak Hill, that the cotton-spinner was one and indivisible from the excalico printer, as the ring of Saturn from its orb.

CHAPTER XI.

The good want power, save to shed barren tears.

The powerful, goodness want: worse need for them.

The wise want love, and those who love, want wisdom:

And all best things are thus confused to ill.

SHELLEY'S PROMETHEUS.

THE visit of a *grande dame* like Lady Delavile to Oak Hill, was of course the means of drawing to the place from the opposite shore, certain supremities of fashion; who had, for years, surveyed its beautiful groves from afar, as those of Paradise Lost. It had always been afflicting to them that a spot so delicious should have fallen to the share of such parias as the elder Hargreaves. Even since Dick Hargreave came into possession, though *almost* disposed to overlook, in favour of his lovely wife the defects of his parent stock, they thought it wiser to forbear. "After all, he was a radical; belonging to a class of people always breaking out in the wrong place; — dangerous acquaintances — presuming neighbours. Better allow Oak Hill to remain quietly in the perspective."

But the moment the Delaviles of Delavile Abbey appeared on the scene, the black flag vanished. Lord Delavile had been, in his bachelor days, one of the earliest founders of the R. Y. C. — One of his sons

was still a member of the club. — On the morning following his arrival therefore he crossed the water; and was heartily welcomed by the nautical dandies who frequent Cowes as they would frequent a *bal masqué*. Before the day was over, half the yachts at the station had testified their desire to have the honour of inaugurating Lady Delavile into the beauties of the Needles and Freshwater, for which the wind was favourable. And vexed enough she was to find herself under the necessity of adhering to the plebeian deck of the Nautilus, when a whole schoonerful of rank and fashion was waiting for her to complete its freight.

“Come with us to-morrow, dear Lady Delavile,” said Margaret, taking pity on her manifest disappointment. “The Nautilus will be at your orders every day of the week. To-day, I have engagements that will occupy me till your return; and the children, with their governess and tutor, will be overjoyed to succeed to our luncheon and cruise.”

It was amusing to see with what alacrity the release was accepted. In a moment, the cloaks and waterproofs of Lady Delavile were transferred from the boat of the Nautilus to that of the Tiger-Moth; and Lord Felix Taut, who stood waiting on the pier to offer her his arm, (looking somewhat Monsieur Petipa would look if arrayed in a P-coat and sou'-wester,) placed her smilingly on her elastic cushion, and away flew

the gig from east to west, as fast as three pair of crack oars, or a magic wishing-cap, could carry it.

Lady Hargreave, who had declined Lord Felix's earnest invitation to her to join the party, was waiting the arrival of little William and Mary, for whom she had despatched a messenger to Oak Hill with the glad tidings of a holiday and a sail; when a dirty boy — a species of mudlark such as are always hanging about the landing-places of Cowes, both East and West, — sidled towards her. In the interest of her spotless dress of *batite écru*, she drew back. Even when the boy addressed her by name, she kept at a sufficient distance while bestowing the alms which his mutterings seemed to implore; and, unable to bear the glare of the sea or heat of the midday sun in that unsheltered spot, resolved to ascend the hill, leisurely, and meet the children on the road.

Still, the ragged urchin she had relieved, pursued her; till, annoyed by his importunity, she turned suddenly round and asked what he meant by thus annoying her. All he wanted was apparently obtained, in the means of approaching her nearer; for, having placed a letter in her hand, he scudded off at pretty nearly the pace accomplished by the boat of the Tiger-Moth, and was out of sight before she could question him further.

All this occurred within the range of the scores of glasses perpetually on the look-out from the windows

of Cowes, and decks of the roadstead; and any idler on the watch may furthermore have noted the astonished air of Lady Hargreave, as she unfolded the note so singularly delivered. She was indeed inexpressibly amazed. For though no signature was affixed, she recognized at once a handwriting which she had not seen for the last ten years; and which, in former days, had never been a source of pleasurable emotions. It was that of her aunt, Lady Milicent; of whom nothing had transpired of late years, save that, after the sale of Hephange — the scanty neighbourhood of which did not present a sufficiently extended sphere for Dr. Macwheeble's taste for society or his talents for proselytism, — the happy couple had retired to Bath; to revel in their handsome fortune in a ample circle of sycophants.

All this was very different from the state of affairs intimated by the few incoherent, crooked lines, which Lady Hargreave was now perusing. She found herself adjured by the memory of her kind grandmother, to hasten to the relief of one who was a prisoner and in exceeding great misery. She was to come secretly, alone, — on foot, — between six and seven in the evening, at which time alone her "unhappy aunt" was accessible.

The spot she was required to visit was a scattered village, situated on the road from Cowes to Ryde; through which Lady Hargreave frequently passed, with-

out interest, when driving in her pony phaeton. She remembered that, in addition to the usual allowance of hovels, ale-houses, and chandler's shops, it contained a few villas and "cottages of gentility," such as are always to be found within reach of the sea-side; and as the lady of Dursley and Oak Hill was no longer the light-footed, light-limbed Margaret of Bardsel Tower, who made so little of the hilly road to Hargreen, on the arm of her brother or Ralph Hargreave, the prospect of a walk of two miles, or rather four, alone, in that sultry summer heat, was somewhat alarming.

She did not hesitate however. Her mother's sister had appealed to her sense of duty; and throughout the long intervening morning ere she started on her expedition, throughout the idle gossiping visits imposed upon her as a penance for possessing the prettiest villa within lounge of a bathing-place, she could scarcely tranquillize her surmises concerning the strange summons she had received. The hour arrived at last; and, a little ashamed of issuing alone from her gates, a thing foreign to her habits, she started along the dusty road. At that time of the day, as much of the idle world as was not afloat, was usually assembled on the opposite shore; and she noticed, ere she turned into the shady road, that the Esplanade beneath the Castle was crowded.

As she slowly proceeded, nervous and embarrassed at the strangeness of her expedition, it was but natural

that her feelings should recur to those earlier, those earliest days, when Aunt Milicent was a person so alarming to her little heart — the standing referee of Nurse Hatley in all matters of reproof or punishment. That the authority so long dreaded — the severe rigid woman who had driven her with a flaming sword, first out of Lady Bournemouth's affections, and lastly out of her fortune, — could be herself subjected to durance and persecution, seemed impossible. That hard, wilful, selfish woman to be a victim! — That smooth-tongued cozening traitor to prove a tyrant! — How strange a revolution — yet what poetical justice in the decree!

As she slowly wended her way between well-trimmed hedgerows overgrown here and there with honeysuckle and travellers' joy, Lady Hargreave fell into a train of philosophical reflection unusual to her. She could not help comparing the dictatorial woman of fashion she had quitted that morning, who, while seeming to conform to the habits of her house, had revolutionised everything — hours, customs, society — making her conscious every moment of the day of a tacit inferiority on the part of herself and her belongings; — with the queer quaint spinster of Bardsel, so far below Lady Delavile in the scale of social distinctions, so far above her in real refinement of mind; — who, in her own house, had been cautious to conform to the tastes and usages of her guest.

Before the Dean's daughter had brought her scale of comparison to a close, she found herself at the spot pointed out by Lady Millicent's missive; and an old man wandering about with a basket of barley sugar-sticks and cotton stay-laces, in search of human charity, readily informed her in what part of the village Laurel Cottage was to be found.

Laurel Cottage indeed! — Never did place answer better to its name. For all that was visible on arriving at the wicket, was an overgrown green wall composed of the tree sacred to heroes, unpleached and unpruned, till the branches nearly met over what would have been called a gravel-walk, had it ever chanced to be gravelled; but which consisted of hard, damp earth, rough with worm-casts, and even now, in the heat of summer, varied here and there in the noisome shade by a clayey half-dried puddle.

On reaching the cottage, a small shabby tenement which, approached in the rear, exhibited in lieu of windows only a mean doorway partly sheltered by a broken wooden lattice, green with damp and overhung by a straggling honey-suckle; with a few unsightly specimens of household linen hanging to dry on a clothes-line suspended between the porch and an opposite laurel. Visitors were evidently unexpected, and unprovided for, in that desolate approach.

Lady Hargreave pulled the bell-knob, which resisted as though the wire were rusted; and as no one

noticed the appeal, it was probably the case. After waiting long and impatiently to have the door opened, she crept towards the front of the cottage, opening to a weedy lawn; then, finding a glass-door open, walked unceremoniously into the house. All was still. Two parlour doors presented themselves on either side a mean entrance. Lady Hargreave luckily chanced upon the right one; for, on gently turning the handle, she found herself in presence of two females. The one with her back towards her, square, burly, insolent, like a policeman in woman's clothes, was engrossed by the perusal of an old fragment of newspaper. The individual opposite, fronting the entrance, seated listless and unoccupied in a chair apparently the very reverse of easy, — a strange gaunt-looking woman, in a discoloured dressing-gown, whose head was divested of all covering, save a stubbly crop of short grey hair, and whose care-worn haggard face exhibited the vacant stare peculiar to persons of infirm intellect, — appeared to be — (but it was scarcely possible!) — appeared to be the disjointed remnant of what was once the prim, well-dressed, fair-spoken, Lady Milicent Bourne.

"My dear aunt!" exclaimed Lady Hargreave, hurrying towards her, in reply to the gesture of thankfulness with which her entrance was noted. But in a moment, the attendant dragon was on her feet, and on the alert.

"This invalid lady, Ma'am, is a patient under my charge, and strictly forbidden the excitement of visits and strangers," said she, drawing herself up to the full altitude of her six feet, and interposing an alarming barrier between her unfortunate charge and the intruder.

"As the nearest relative of Lady Milicent Macwheeble," replied Lady Hargreave, mildly, "I am entitled to an interview. You can remain present, if you think proper. I should however recommend you to retire."

Astonished to find her authority so coolly set at nought, the keeper, conscious that it would be dangerous to eject forcibly from the house a lady so richly attired, and exhibiting such unmistakeable symptoms of authority, bustled off into the kitchen to revenge herself by reprimanding the careless servant maid who shared her duties at Laurel Cottage, for disobedience to orders in allowing a visitor to enter the house; leaving Margaret during her absence to express with many tears to her unfortunate relative, her deep affliction at finding her in a plight so distressing.

"Well may you say so, Margaret," replied the unfortunate woman, whom at threescore, much care and much sickness had converted into an aged hag. "I used you ill, child. I used you harshly and unjustly. But you are avenged. That man, that wretch, that

assassin, has revenged you. He has been the ruin, of me, Margaret. He has stripped me of all I possessed — honour, fortune, reason, health. — Not that I am mad, Margaret; not that I ever was mad — do not believe *that*, child. Better, perhaps, that my mind were really infirm; for then, I should be less conscious of the shame I have been brought to. But mad people don't reason, Margaret Mordaunt. Mad people don't plan means for their own deliverance. That boy, Margaret, whom they allow to come here gathering chickweed and groundsel for sale in these beautiful pleasure-grounds of theirs, — I managed to find out from him where you lived. I knew it was not far from Cowes: and so I have got you here, niece, to my rescue, — I have got you here to defend me against my enemies. — Ha! ha! ha! — He and his step-daughter (as he calls her) go at this hour, every evening, to meeting — evening prayer they call it. — And when they return to-day, ha! ha! ha! ha! — the old bird will be flown, flown, flown!" —

The increasing wildness of Lady Milicent's manner added terror to the heartfelt compassion with which Lady Hargreave was contemplating the wreck before her. She besought the old lady to be calm. But by cross-questioning her concerning the origin of her present wretched establishment, she added fuel to the flames.

"Why am I here? Why am I placed in the power

of that dragoon of a woman? I will tell you, Margaret. But I must be brief, child; for the Philistines will soon be upon us. After we left Hephanger, woe worth the day, for it was wicked of me, it was base, sordid, ungrateful, to allow that old family place to be sold to the heathen; we went to settle in Bath, where that man loved to live, surrounded by people who made him their prophet and Pope, as I did once, Margaret Mordaunt, (before I learned that my idol was a block of wood fashioned by my own folly. — Once established there,) he brought legions of his canting followers, to prey upon my substance. But that was not the worst. There was a woman — a low-born Scotch woman — whom he called his step-daughter, the widow of a son of his first wife; (there was no talk of a first marriage, Margaret, when he made a dupe of me in Eaton Place;) and this Mrs. Harrington he brought home to live with us. Yes, child, he, the son of a Greenock dry-salter, brought home one of his low relations to sit at the board of the daughter of the Earl of Bournemouth.”

“Gently, gently, dear aunt,” whispered Margaret, dreading the tempest foreshown by her gradually-rising voice.

“How would you have me gentle, Margaret! They used to sit at my table — eating my bread — and sneering at and jeering me, — those two! — She was young, handsome, insolent, the so-called step-

daughter; and, between them, they harassed and goaded me into violence, and then called me a mad woman! — Me, a mad woman! — Dr. Macwheeble, the hypocrite, pretended to hope, forsooth, that, in answer to his prayers, it would please the Almighty to rid me of the devil by which I was possessed! The woman only laughed, — laughed, — laughed, like a fiend, as she was. *She* was the devil, Margaret, who possessed me; and that they knew, though they went through the farce of calling in doctors and nurses; ay, and keepers, Miss Mordaunt, with handcuffs and strait waistcoats, — to me, — who might have been that woman's mother, and compelled her to duty and submission!"

Even with the spectacle before her of Lady Millicent's terrible humiliation, Margaret could not but call to mind how peculiarly qualified she was for the exercise of despotic power.

"But all this is not what I would tell you," continued the invalid, in whose eyes there glistened, at interval, a frantic glare which too sadly justified the precautions of her husband. "I want you to get me out of their hands. You and your brother are my next of kin, Margaret. The Mordaunts are my legal heirs and guardians. William must instantly apply for a *habeas corpus*, to bring me before Chancery; and then and there will I testify against the wolf in sheep's clothing who has brought an Earl's daughter to this

horrible pass. Your husband is in Parliament, Lady Hargreave. Let him speak for me — let him act for me; and, as I live and breathe, he shall inherit all I possess.”

“Sir Richard will need no bribe, my dear aunt, to induce him to exert himself in behalf of the injured.”

“Everybody needs bribes, child. Behold, the flocks are shepherdless, and what man helpeth his neighbour? These people dared not keep me in Bath, Lady Hargreave; because there, the walls have not only ears, but eyes and tongues. They brought me here, because a mild climate suited me: suited *them*, I believe; it clearly don't suit *me*!” — continued the old lady, stretching out her wasted wrists, which were bony as those of a skeleton.

“And have you been here long, Aunt Millicent?”

“How can I tell! — There was snow on the ground when we left home. It was Christmas, I believe. I don't know much about times and seasons. But I am certain that we have been here ever since, watching the weeds grow. And if the hours are long to me, 't is some comfort that they are longer to *them*. For they thought when they heard me cough in snow time, that my hour was come, and that they were free. And here I am, Margaret, and there you are. I long, long, *long* remembered a bitter letter which your brother William wrote me, after his father's death, from Sir Thomas Hargreave's, at Cowes; and so it naturally came to my

mind again, when we landed there. I thought of it afterwards — I thought of it always. — At last, I was able to get that boy to make enquiries for me, and answer me, and convey to you that blessed letter. — Margaret — Margaret! — save me, or I perish!”

Long before Lady Milicent concluded her appeal, the woman in charge of her had returned into the room; and stood opposite with her arms akembo and a satisfied air, as if enjoying the scene.

“You see now, Mem, I hope,” said she, addressing Lady Hargreave, at the close of Lady Milicent’s harangue, “who was wrong, and who was right. Not fit to be left to herself for ten minutes of the day! All the effect of an unfortunate brain-fever. However, this present attack has been brought on solely by seeing of a stranger; and you’ll answer for it, I make bold to hope, to the good doctor, and his step-daughter, whom I am expecting home to tea, minute after minute.”

“Don’t stay, child. I won’t have you stay, to be insulted and talked down by the false Gamaliel, as you were at Hephanger. — The idiotic chit he used to ask you. — Ha! ha! ha! ha! — The idiotic chit will now be the means of bringing him to judgment — to judgment — to judge —”

“Mind, my lady. I only tell you to *mind*,” interrupted the keeper. “If your ladyship continues talking

in this rampageous manner, we must find means to stop you."

"Ay, you'll beat me: as she's often done before, Margaret. So get away with you, my dear, that I may be spared," cried the old lady; her short grey hair seeming to bristle on her head with indignation, like that of an angry terrier. "But I'm happy now, Margaret Mordaunt. I shall sleep in my bed, now. My kith and kin are warned. I shall not be murdered in cold blood. So go, my child, and God speed you; and bring you back to me again, with a stout heart and a strong arm to back you, and complete my deliverance!"

There was so much more sense in the exhortation than might have been expected from a person in a state thus bewildered, that Lady Hargreave judged it best to comply. She really dreaded an interview with the obnoxious Dr. Macwheeble; and, judging from the woman placed in authority over her unfortunate relative, formed no very high opinion of the step-daughter.

"You may rely upon my taking instant steps for your legal protection, my dear aunt," said she, saluting the old lady's skinny hand. "Depend upon every exertion in my power!"

"You are very like your mother, Margaret Mordaunt!" — was Lady Millicent's incoherent reply. "Just so used poor Mary to speak and look! *She* was a kindly creature. If I ever wronged her — if I ever persecuted

you, God hath dealt hard measure to me in return. I have suffered, Margaret — *how* I have suffered. Pray Heaven I may also have atoned. — Pray — *pray* Heaven I may have atoned." —

Strange moisture glistened in Lady Milicent's hard grey eyes, as she gazed for a moment, still holding her hand, into the face of Lady Hargreave.

Margaret fancied with horror, when she had taken leave and quitted the room, and reached the garden, that she heard a heavy blow, a piteous cry! —

CHAPTER XII.

Le monde ne pardonne point au bonheur qu'il ne sanctionne pas. Il en mine sourdement le fragile édifice; et quand l'édifice a croulé, il en sâlit les débris, et remue incessamment les ruines, pour que la fleur du souvenir ne puisse y croître et s'y épanouir.

BALZAC.

It need scarcely be recorded that the homeward walk of Lady Hargreave was sad and harassing. Her gentle mind was overawed by the spectacle she had witnessed, by the wild speeches — the wandering eyes — the upstarting hair of the unfortunate maniac. The sufferings of the aged are always a sorry sight; and it was no consolation to know that her own and her mother's wrongs had been visited with such terrible retribution.

Moreover, though there could be no pretext for immuring a woman of Lady Milicent's fortune in a retreat so little suitable to her position in life, Margaret was forced to accept her complaints with a certain reservation. Lady Milicent's accusations, in the present instance, perhaps as far exceeded the truth as when, in presence of Lady Bournemouth's whole establishment, she accused her niece of having murdered her grandmother. This recollection came happily to the support of Dr. Macwheeble.

On attaining the summit of the hill, descending from Osborne to East Cowes, Lady Hargreave discerned in the distance the graceful outline of the Nautilus with her sails set, sweeping towards the landing-pier of Oak Hill. And never had she felt more thankful to Heaven for having bestowed upon her babes to honour her and render her old age happy, than when reflecting that the lightsome vessel before her, which

Chas'd the whistling brine and swirl'd into the bay,

contained her healthy, happy, prosperous children, about to rush home with thankful acknowledgments for their unexpected holiday.

Margaret resolved to hasten on, and order their supper prepared for their arrival. It was half-past seven. The Oak Hill dinner-hour was eight. Her guests would probably soon make their appearance.

Soon? Alas! as she reached the garden-entrance opening to the western lawn, seated under a deep verandah covered with climbing plants in full flower, Lord and Lady Delaville already awaited her return — Lord and Lady Delaville, and a third person.

"We have brought you a recruit, dear Lady Hargreave," cried the Viscountess from a distance, in her shrillest tones. "A reluctant recruit, moreover, to his everlasting shame be it spoken!" —

"Fanshawe would not hear of intruding upon you for dinner, my dear Lady Hargreave," added Lord

Delavile, advancing to meet her; while Herbert Fanshawe stood with his hat uplifted, as if waiting her authorisation to make himself at home. At her first glimpse of the group, however, he had appeared more like the master of the house than an invited guest.

"Was Mr. Fanshawe made prisoner by the Tiger Moth, or was it a voluntary surrender?" inquired Margaret, with a constrained smile, after giving her hand to her visitor, who was instantly at his ease.

"We found him on board Lord Felix's cutter; where, by the way, dear Lady Hargreave, you were fully expected."

"As I can testify," added Fanshawe. "I was tempted to embark this morning, before my eyes were half open, by an assurance that Lady Delavile and Lady Hargreave were to form part of the crew."

"And so after a most delightful sail, we brought him off forcibly in the boat," added Lord Delavile. "All the others were engaged to dinner at the Castle; and we persuaded Fanshawe that it would be a disgrace to the hospitality of Cowes, if he was known to have dined alone at Aris's."

"It would at least have been using us very shabbily, after Mr. Fanshawe had been informed how much our party was in need of extension," said Lady Hargreave. "Sir Richard is detained at Dursley. I trust Mr. Fanshawe, you have made up your mind to stay and assist me in entertaining Lord Delavile?"

Of course he would stay. It was exactly what he had always intended. It was exactly what Lady Delaville, so prone to form other people's engagements for them, had originally projected. Her ladyship immediately settled it *for* Lady Hargreave, not *with* Lady Hargreave, that while they were dressing for dinner, the boat of the Nautilus should be despatched back across the water, to bring back Mr. Fanshawe's luggage from the Globe. And lo! the new-comer slipped as quietly into the neat little bachelor bedroom with hangings of straw-coloured chintz, as though he had slept there the previous night.

Had he indeed slept there the preceding night, it would have been sorely against the wish of Margaret; who wanted, just then, no addition to her family circle. But during the process of changing her yachting dress for the high muslin gown which constituted her summer-evening costume, it occurred to her, that Fanshawe's arrival might prove a blessing. Lady Milicent's position was urgent. Her visit to Laurel Cottage would give the alarm; and the patient might be removed to secret confinement hard to discover, before she was able to obtain assistance or even counsel from Sir Richard. Against consulting Lord Delaville, she had fully resolved; as in that case, not the smallest cabin-boy of the R. Y. S. but would have heard, before the expiration of four-and-twenty hours (thanks to the ramifications of the United Gossip As-

sociation of which Lady Delaville was a vice-president) that "poor dear Lady Hargreave possessed a host of mad relations; one of whom was chained up by the family in a miserable asylum somewhere in the Isle of Wight."

Herbert Fanshawe, with his unimpassioned self-possession, would be the very man to confer with Dr. Macwheeble, if conference proved indispensable to the relief of the invalid. Herbert Fanshawe, with his diplomatic caution, would be the very man to preserve the strictest secrecy on the subject, when they should have succeeded in their purpose.

Great therefore was his surprise, on finding a billet placed in his hands as soon as his eyes had opened the following morning on the straw-coloured hangings, and the glorious brightness of the sea, extended like a mirror beyond — in the handwriting of the Dean's daughter! — He fancied, for a moment, that he must be still dreaming! That Margaret, by whom he was uniformly treated with such reserve — such polished coldness — should write of her own accord to propose a secret meeting, was almost a blow to him.

Propose one however she did. She actually begged him to detach himself from the Oak Hill party, immediately after breakfast, and hasten to the pine tree-bench on the shore; where Lady Hargreave promised to be in waiting. There was no disguise — no subterfuge — no caution. The letter was written in her

own hand-writing, signed with her own name, and sealed with her usual seal. And yet, she dared to bid him beware of being seen by the Delaviles on his way to their place of rendezvous! —

"Englishwomen are the most inscrutable beings!" mused he, as he leisurely tied his cravat, and studied his physiognomy in the glass. "Such inordinate value on character; in conduct such reckless waste! — Not even a patent envelope! — That hoddy-hoddy *soubrette* of her's, Mrs. Harston probably read every syllable of the billet, before she delivered it to my man."

It was an agitated breakfast. Though Lady Delaville recounted, according to her wont, the contents of her private and confidential foreign correspondence, which far exceeded in interest, if not volume, that of Downing Street, confidential, but not private; though Lord Delaville endeavoured to amuse his hostess by an account of their cruise in the *Tiger-Moth*, and the epicuro-nautical life of Vice-Commodore Lord Felix Taut, — Margaret could scarcely affect an interest in the conversation. He could have worshipped her for what he considered the *naïveté* of sending him a curious admixture of coffee and dietetic cocoa, compounded in a fit of absence of mind, in place of the tea he asked for.

After breakfast, cunning woman, she sent for the children, to engage Lady Delaville's attention; Lord Delaville having already disappeared on his daily pil-

grimace across the water to the Club. And the moment little Mary had taken possession of the Viscountess, her mother slipped out of the room; and had reached the pinetrees before Herbert Fanshawe, with his cigar in his mouth, made his leisurely appearance at the spot.

"Ever avoid an air of haste," said he, as if reciting one of Bacon's apothegms, "when you wish to avoid exciting attention."

Time pressed. Without noticing his impertinence, she commenced her explanation: which was far more rapid and more clear than her disappointed auditor could have desired. In a few minutes, he was in possession of the whole story. In a few minutes, he was aware of being sought as a privy councillor; different oh! how different from his selfish anticipations!

"As the friend of my brother Mildenhall," said Lady Hargreave, "you will, I am persuaded, afford me such aid as *he* would give me, were he on the spot. I need not tell you that *his* part in the play would never be of a dangerous or compromising nature. But I am most anxious to do my duty by my mother's sister, without, if possible, attracting publicity to her affliction."

Undoubtedly — unquestionably. — He would do anything and everything Lady Hargreave might suggest. Perhaps it would be better if they repaired together to the house; demanded an interview with this

Dr. Macwheeble; and threatened him with legal investigation, unless his wife was instantly furnished with those comforts and decencies of life which her fortune entitled her to enjoy.

"Suppose, then," replied Margaret, "that we persuade the Delaviles to join the sailing party to St. Clare, which you were talking about yesterday evening. You will not perhaps mind renouncing it, to render so great a service to my family, as well as to a woman so unfortunate. In that case, we might drive as if towards Ryde; and stop the carriage at the entrance of the village, to avoid attracting notice."

Such a proposition was not likely to be rejected by Herbert Fanshawe. He would rather, however, she had shown a little less *sang-froid* in proposing to him half a morning's *tête-à-tête*. But it was clear that her mind was absorbed in the critical position of the unfortunate Lady Milicent; for, as if she feared to have failed in sufficiently interesting his feelings in behalf of her unhappy relative, she began to retrace in more circumstantial detail, the picture of her wretched retreat.

She spoke with emotion, for she spoke out of the abundance of her heart; and before she had ended her story, tears were streaming down her cheeks. Fanshawe, who was seated beside her, naturally drew closer to whisper words of encouragement and kindness; as specious as though he had borrowed them of

his saccharine friend Altavilla, so much in the habit of whispering, according to Moore's simile, —

As if bottled velvet slipp'd over his lips.

In a moment, however, he interrupted himself. His quick eye discerned, hastily retreating among the arbutus bushes, a couple of jacketed and straw-hatted dandies, who had ascended the bank from the shore; and who, on finding the bench occupied by, instead of the assembled Oak Hill party to whom their message from the Castle was addressed, only what they conceived to be a remarkably happy pair, were hurrying away, thoroughly ashamed of their intrusion.

But Fanshawe understood the danger of such a misunderstanding. Awkward as was the position, it must be met, face to face.

"We came with a message to Lady Delavile," said Captain Rhys, on finding himself hailed, and required to show his letters of marque. "Lord Delavile told us we should find her hereabouts; and from below, we mistook Lady Hargreave's dress for hers."

"Naturally enough; for they are as nearly alike as possible," interposed Margaret, rallying her spirits. "I have just left her. Lady Delavile is afraid, I believe, to dazzle her eyes by noonday sunshine. Let us all return together and find her under the verandah."

In returning, as proposed, it was only natural for Captain Rhys and his friend as they followed Lady

Hargreave up the ascent to the house, to exchange shrugs and glances, as much as to say — "old fellow! we have put our foot into it."

Poor Margaret was however much too full of her family troubles to take heed of them. As soon as she had conducted them to Lady Delavile, and expressed her wish to be exempted from the morning's engagements, on pretence of an urgent visit to be paid, she returned to her own room, to address a letter to Lord Mildenhall on the subject of Lord Millicent's sufferings. She had not much hope that he would lift up so much as a finger in her behalf. He was one of those who expect the duties of life to be fulfilled by other people for their benefit, without the smallest reciprocity of exertion. But in William's absence from England, to whom else could she apply? — It was too painful to have to say to her husband — "My nearest female relative is insane. Help me to save her from the scourge and strait waistcoat; and to pray that our children may not be similarly afflicted." To Fanshawe, devoid of personal interest in the question, but so considerate and so judicious, it was far easier to be indebted.

Lady Delavile meanwhile, though accustomed to the independence of the great ladies, her *commensales*, the coolness of Margaret was astounding. She, Lady Delavile, had brought Herbert Fanshawe home with her to Oak Hill, for the sole purpose of relieving by his ready wit and extensive information, the *ennui* of being alone

with Lord Delavile and Lady Hargreave; and here was this model wife, — whose domestic virtues she had heard cited by Ralph Hargreave as though she were a Lady Rachel Russell or a Margaret Roper, — making assignations with the most fashionable of modern *roués*, as unblushingly as though she were reciting a canticle. Of all audacities, Lady Delavile thought this the most audacious. Had she been on speaking terms with Lord Delavile on any other topics than those of public interest, she certainly would have intrusted to him her conviction that their beautiful hostess, if not already numbered with the fallen angels, was progressing rapidly towards the abdication of her wings.

And if such the opinion of a woman predisposed to like and admire her, what was likely to be the award of the ninety and nine triflers, envious of the prosperity of one who was neither of their clique, nor over-awed by its self-constituted ascendancy.

Margaret had been seen (by that ubiquitous spy called "Somebody," who, like Satan in the time of Job, is perpetually 'wandering up and down on the earth, and walking up and down in it,') to receive a billet from a disreputable-looking boy. She had next been watched, by the same mysterious agent, leaving her home almost clandestinely — quite unattended — to take what she was never known to do at Oak Hill — a solitary walk. That same evening (the same evening, mind you, quoth Somebody), who should suddenly

appear at Cowes, (aha!) but Herbert Fanshawe, — so much talked about for the Dean's daughter before Dick Hargreave came forward to offer her his hand; and according to the account of Hartwell of the Blues, her faithful shepherd in the family pinfold at Mildenhall. Last of all, Somebody had heard it whispered at the Club by Captain Rhys, and this was a more exquisite song than the other, that Lady Hargreave and Fanshawe had been found together in a secluded spot of the grounds at Oak Hill, under circumstances that left no doubt of the good understanding between them. At this, Somebody of course expressed himself inexpressibly shocked; and Everybody, like echo, was inexpressibly shocked in its turn.

Lady Delavile, before all things a woman of the world, took care when they met at the dinner-table that evening, to enlarge volubly on the beauties of St. Clare, and the pleasantness of their morning's sail; careful not to let it appear that she was either annoyed, or surprised. At present, she did not see her way clearly through Margaret's conduct or intentions. Why, therefore, create a coolness between them, on mere supposition; when Oak Hill afforded so far more luxurious a means of enjoying the pastime of yachting, than by paying five-and-twenty guineas a week for an ill-furnished villa? Fanshawe, too, was a person to be conciliated. Independent of his inherent qualifications, he was cousin to the Duke of Merioneth, who, finding

that his young kinsman had achieved independence, had lately taken it into his head to oppress him with patronage. Her ladyship continued, therefore, to look on and see nothing; fixing her eyes upon objects in aerial perspective, and talking incessantly of past and future, as though the present had no existence.

One evening, a pleasant twilight after a series of summer showers, when the glow-worms were beginning to gleam out upon the moss and the moon upon the rippling waters of the Solent, Lady Delavile (the little family party, being increased by a few friends whom she had coolly invited to meet herself at Oak Hill, small change, she considered them, for the five-guinea-piece Ralph Hargreave, of which she had been defrauded), was endeavouring to rouse up the indolent and dispirited Margaret, to form arrangements for their party to the regatta. The Nautilus was entered for the cup. What was to be their post? In other words, how were they to render themselves most conspicuous, and place themselves most in the way? —

Lady Hargreave was perfectly passive — perfectly acquiescent. Whatever her guest desired, should be done. She was evidently as indifferent to the success of the Nautilus, and the event of the regatta, as if the Cup were to be sailed for by the pirogues of cannibals. Throughout the day, she had been watching the door; evidently anxious, evidently looking out for squalls, though the weather-glass was auspicious.

"I was in hopes, my dear Lady Hargreave," said Lord Delavile, attributing her dejected air to the continued absence of her husband, "that my friend Hargreave would have made his appearance here for a couple of days, for this regatta: He used to talk so much to us, at Dursley, of sailing and Oak Hill."

"Sir Richard was extremely fond of both, before he began his improvements. He would, however, have been here now, Lord Delavile, not for the regatta, but for the pleasure of meeting you under his roof, had not his brother-in-law, Sir Hurst Clitheroe, been obliged to preside over some public meeting at R—, relative to the Great Exhibition. He took the opportunity to bring Lady Clitheroe and her children, to pay a long-promised visit to Dursley, which, of course, detains Sir Richard."

"True! I saw the meeting announced in our county paper," replied Lord Delavile. "There was a — a not very wise — address, signed by Sir Hurst. I should have found more fault with it, had I surmised that it would be the pretext for depriving me of the company of my friend Hargreave."

Margaret had not spirits to make the reply required of her. She would willingly have said what politeness demanded, to a person she so sincerely regarded as Lord Delavile. But a heavy weight was on her heart.

A bell heard in the distance announced, at that moment, that the last steamer from Southampton was

arriving; and the idlers lounging in various parts of the room, enjoying the cool evening air that entered through the conservatory, after a hot and stormy day, rose up and stood under the verandah which shaded the western aspect of the house, to see the boat rapidly approach the pier; its lamps resembling the fiery eyes of some marine-monster, rushing upon shore.

It touched the landing-place; and the clamour of arrivals and departures reached them in a murmur, even at that remote spot. Five minutes afterwards, hasty footsteps were heard approaching the house, which the whole party had re-entered. In a moment, a stranger was among them. A stranger? — not exactly. To the amazement of all present — to the inexpressible surprise of Herbert Fanshawe, — Sir Richard Hargreave made his appearance; weary, travel-stained, haggard — exhibiting a face where assumed smiles struggled with unconcealable annoyance.

Margaret came timidly forward, to mingle her welcome with the general outcry of gratulation and astonishment. Lady Delavile looked alarmed, expecting some Lucy of Lammermoor-ish catastrophe. Somebody had evidently sent for this inopportune husband.

Her ladyship was, of course, far too clever to divine anything so natural as that the Somebody on this occasion was no other than his wife! —

CHAPTER XIII.

En amour, il y a toujours un qui aime l'autre. Il était décidé à n'être jamais plus que l'autre. — ALPHONSE KARR.

Cette âme machinée comme un théâtre, cachait mille fausses trappes, par lesquelles on pouvait se montrer ou disparaître subitement. C'était un spectacle d'éternelles surprises, sans que l'artifice pût être soupçonné. Tout cela paraissait plus naturel que la nature; plus vrai que la vérité.

ÉMILE SOUVESTRE.

IN that uneventful phase of society which presumes to call itself the Great World, anything catastrophic — anything that tends to produce a ripple on the mill-pond, becomes miraculous; as a molehill becomes a mountain on Salisbury Plain.

Next morning, albeit that crisis of the Vectian year, the Cup day, excitement of a private nature had the best of it at Cowes.

"Shocking affair this, at Oak Hill! — *Le mari* has made his appearance. — A terrible scene! — Sir Richard walked up, unannounced, from the last Southampton steamer; found Fanshawe and Lady Hargreave sitting apart from the rest of the party under the tent; and what followed might be surmised —"

"He turned Fanshawe out of the house?"

"N-n-o! — On the contrary, they were seen at the sandwich-tray, drinking sherry and seltzer-water to-

gether. But the countenances of both plainly showed what was passing in their minds."

As if in the year of grace eighteen hundred and fifty, *any* countenance showed plainly what was passing in its mind!

Still more completely were the gossips at fault, when, the following day, Lady Hargreave made her appearance at the regatta, looking unusually handsome, and unusually well-dressed; leaning upon the arm of Herbert Fanshawe, in the face of the whole club-house — *and no Sir Richard!* Somebody had a great mind to be angry. But as Lady Delavile, in one of her happiest humours, was patting the Dean's daughter on the arm, perfectly satisfied, what business had anybody else to dissent? "Much better obtain an insight into the odds, and make your bets on the race."

On this occasion, there was some excuse for the blunder of Somebody. It was difficult to conjecture that Lady Hargreave had sent for her husband, in terms it was difficult for him to resist: explaining her sad discovery concerning the unfortunate Lady Milicent. She told him that, at first unwilling to annoy him, she had obtained the interference of Mr. Fanshawe who, invited by Lady Delavile, was a guest at Oak Hill; and who, having warmly espoused the cause of the unhappy old lady, had met with threats and insults. The burly Doctor had not hesitated to resort to violent means to expel him from the sanctum at Laurel Cottage.

Under these circumstances, Margaret felt sure that, however inconvenient to his affairs at Dursley, Sir Richard would hasten to her assistance; and the result was, that, eager to fulfil her wishes, he arrived four-and-twenty hours before she had thought it possible he could reach Oak Hill.

It is true he was a little angry with her. He considered that she had done wrong in delegating to a mere acquaintance, a distasteful office which belonged of right to himself. And, late as it was when the male part of the Oak Hill party separated for the night after enjoying in the calm moonlight of that delicious night, the best of cigars and weakest of iced cognac and water, he repaired afterwards to Fanshawe's room, to confer with him touching the family dilemma; to hear from him how intolerable a brute the Greenock doctor had shown himself; and how immediately the attention of a magistrate ought to be called to Lady Millicent's distresses. There was no sort of occasion, he averred, for the coercion practised on her.

That Lord Delaville's valet, who apparently kept irregular hours in regatta time, should have met the master of the house coming out of Mr. Fanshawe's room at two o'clock in the morning, after a prolonged conference, with a face as haggard and portentous as that of O. Smith in a melodrama, was naturally repeated the following day, at the Club, to the great edification of Somebody.

Moreover, in the accounts of the regatta transmitted for several following days to all parts of England, by Somebody's "own correspondent," after a description of the races won and the sums lost upon them — of an accident by which a wherry was run down, and a bet by which a "broken dandy, lately on his travels," was finally done up, — came an account of the company assembled at Cowes: — "The As of course — the Bs with their pretty daughters, Lady C. good-humoured and foolish as usual — and that beautiful Lady Hargreave — but no Sir Richard:" — the text being varied by allusions to Fanshawe, and hints that matters at Oak Hill were getting a little too bad; slight rumours, but barbed like thistle seed, to be wafted afar off and take root wherever they alighted.

One such letter passing through the hands of Barty Tomlinson, or Early Intelligence, was as sure of a circulation of thousands of copies, as one of Dickens's serials or a popular pamphlet.

Lady Hargreave, whom her noble guests insisted upon dragging to the regatta-ball, would perhaps have found herself for the first time coldly received, had not the most kindly-natured of the *grandes dames* present, a woman too well-looking and too well-dressed to be envious of poor Margaret's gentle loveliness, taken her under her wing; saying aloud that, as Sir Richard was too idle to come, she must act as her chaperon.

To expect companionship from Lady Delavile on

such an occasion, was much the same as to expect it from a dragon-fly. No sooner did that veteran of fashion find herself in the illuminated atmosphere of a crowded room, no matter where, than she was hovering and darting from acquaintance to acquaintance, asking hurried questions and making the answers to them; talking incessantly, yet having nothing to say; enveloping trifles in mystery, yet treating important mysteries as a trifle. Lord Delavile judiciously stole off to the whist-table; and but for Lady A—'s opportune intervention, Margaret would have remained alone in the crowd.

For, to the great disappointment of the lovers of scandal, no Herbert Fanshawe was in attendance! Some protested that there had been a hostile meeting betwixt him and Sir Richard; and that one or both was dangerously wounded. Lady Hargreave, under the wordly tutorage of Lady Delavile having been forced out, in spite of all, to save appearances. Others declared that the moment Sir Richard made his appearance at Oak Hill, Fanshawe chartered a steamer and was off for the main-land. One thing was clear: that the gossips, (to borrow Mark Lemon's famous pun), since they knew nothing def-in-ite had better have remained dumb-in-it: for they were furlongs distant from the truth.

For some months past — more than some — more than six — Herbert Fanshawe had been soliciting, or

rather, beating about the bush, to obtain the reversion of an important diplomatic post; which, according to private information he had received, was likely to fall vacant in the course of the autumn. In these our times, talent — nay, even merit, — needs to be powerfully backed to achieve promotion. Sir Claude had in his life-time worn threadbare the family interest; and Herbert was well aware that he had only his connexion with the Duke of Merioneth to recommend him to ministerial notice. This cousinship, accordingly, he had been rubbing up, with the utmost assiduity throughout the season; by calling the Duchess's carriage at every party — filling a place at their Graces' dinner-table at a moment's notice, when some guest had suddenly excused himself; and procuring autographs, ancient and modern, spurious and genuine, to increase his Grace's "unrivalled collection." He had promised a Napoleon — a Marlborough — a Turenne — a Julius Cæsar — a Romulus, or Remus, — no matter what that was fabulous or absurd, by way — of keeping up the steam of the family interest.

The Duke was really disposed to serve him; because he could do so without self-sacrifice. He possessed neither son nor nephew. His title and estates were to descend to a kinsman, whom he disliked as intuitively as people are apt to dislike their heirs; and he was as fond of Fanshawe as he was capable of being of anything not bound in vellum or dug out of a barrow.

A professed Archæologist, the Duke of Merioneth was as dry as the dust of ages in which he delighted.

He had, however, really besieged the Treasury in favour of the kinsman, who, if rich only in autographs, was likely to do more honour to the family tree than the Sir Clod who was hereafter to duke it in his stead; and having obtained information that the envoy to whose functions Herbert Fanshawe was ambitious to succeed, had applied to the Foreign Office for six months' leave of absence on the score of ill-health, the Duke addressed a letter to his *protégé*, marked "to be forwarded," commanding him instantly to town. It required an express — and expedited by a Duke, — to bring Herbert Fanshawe to London in the month of August, when regattas and moors were in their prime; — and it went to his heart to leave Oak Hill — even re-submitted as it was to marital authority.

More than once, more than twice, in his life, had Fanshawe, who piqued himself on his usurped reputation of stoic, become the dupe of his own feelings as regarded the Dean's daughter. At the suggestion of his father, he originally aspired to make a conquest of Margaret Mordaunt, as heiress to Lady Bournemouth, and only daughter of the future Lord Mildenhall. But the corner of his heart that was not evil, prevailed; and the beautiful Margaret, the gentle Margaret, had, instead, made a conquest of himself. At Dursley, in his collegian-hood, he loved her as truly as *he* was

capable of loving. Some hearts are shaken by that mighty passion, as the oak is by the gale:— the leaves rustle, the twigs waver, but branch and stem remain immovable. Others ply like the poplar, or tremble like the aspen. Fanshawe loved like the sturdier tree. The breeze passed, and left no trace of its influence.

A second time, at his own suggestion, he had placed himself within range of her charms; her indifference towards him having piqued him into a desire of subjugating so brilliant a tigress. And again, the loveliness and inartificiality of Margaret had effected the conquest of his shallow heart. As much as he was capable of becoming the slave of woman, he was hers. That is, if the metropolis had been in flames, out of millions of her sex, she was the one whose life he would have sought to save. He would have given half he possessed to believe that the passion was reciprocal. But on this point, he did not deceive himself.

"Better for me, perhaps, that she should remain indifferent," was his philosophical reflection, when on his way across the blue waters to Cowes, for the chance of being invited to Oak Hill. "Playing at fast and loose, in this way, never commits a man. Whereas a regular *liaison* is a millstone round his neck. I have still my fortune to make; and it is not safe to forget, even for a minute, that one is living in the reign of Queen Victoria — not in that of George IV."

When the Duke of Merioneth's letter arrived, therefore, he hesitated no more about embarking in the first steamer, and thence, per express train to town, — than if there had been no regatta in the world — no Lady Milicent — no Lady Hargreave. Of Somebody, he never thought. He did not belong to the class of men who stand in awe of Somebody. This was a fault; because, according to his own account, he had still his fortune to make. This was a fault; because, according to the account of Downing Street, he was ambitious to re-inaugurate himself in the *corps diplomatique*. And to public men, public opinion should be as the fiat of Olympus.

As the steamer thumped and whistled its way athwart Cowes Roads, where the Royal Yacht Squadron was setting up its white wings for the regatta, like a flight of merry sea-gulls pluming themselves for the day, he could not forbear a retrospective glance towards the groves and fragrant gardens of Oak Hill. The shores of the fair island, lined with yellow furze blossoms, might have pretended to the name of the Gold Coast; while the Royal Standard of England floated gaily on the tower predominating above. A fair scene, a lovely spot, that pleasant, island created to form a resort for the gay and prosperous! "Pity," mused Herbert Fanshawe, "that scandal should also have selected it for her favourite home!" If at that moment his mind reverted to beautiful Sicily with

Scylla howling on her coast, he was not often so pedantic.

As the steamer rapidly ascended the Southampton River, instead of noticing its embowered shores, or venerable ruins, his thoughts were occupied in vexatious self-accusation. Not in repentance. Fanshawe was a man who never repented. But he accused himself of having been an ass for overstepping the bounds of prudence, by a too ardent declaration of attachment to Lady Hargreave, as they were returning together in the barouche from their visit to Laurel Cottage. It is true she had made no exaggerated show of resentment. As if aware that the day for Lucretia's dagger was past, she contented herself with wielding the no less cutting weapon of dignified coldness. Thanks to the lessons of Lady Delaville, she was clearly becoming a woman of the world!

His departure from Oak Hill, meanwhile, was sincerely regretted by Sir Richard; who had experienced much annoyance in his dealings with the Greenock doctor. Macwheeble asserted, and not mildly; his right to manage his insane wife, according to the suggestions of his own judgment. It was likely enough, he said, that Lady Millicent might complain of harsh usage. People labouring under cerebral disease, were usually prejudiced against those by whom they were submitted to coercion. But it had become necessary for the safety of the family, to place her under re-

strait; because, ere they quitted Bath, she had not only attempted the life of her husband, but publicly accused him of an illicit connexion with one of his nearest female relatives. She also taxed him with having administered poison to her mother, the late Countess of Bournemouth, with a view 'to the earlier declaration of his marriage; an accusation, as he shrewdly observed, which had been at one time extended to Lady Hargreave. As to her present humble habitation, it had been chosen, as such retreats are usually chosen, chiefly with a view to secrecy, in order to spare the feelings of the family; and Dr. Macwheeble considered it hard that they, expressly repudiated by Lady Milicent when in her right mind, should seize the opportunity of her infirm condition, to come forward in her behalf for his molestation.

There was so much of truth in this defence, that Sir Richard found it difficult to persist in asserting the rights of the old lady to milder usage. And now that Fanshawe was gone, collateral evidence of her neglected state was unproduceable. The motive of his departure had been fully explained. But never had Dick Hargreave more deeply regretted the departure of a stranger from within his gates.

On Margaret's return home from the second day's regatta, a conference took place between her and her husband, in which he communicated with so much feeling how deeply he had been touched by the sight

of Lady Milicent, and the difficulty he had found in making better terms for her with the man who not only hardened his heart like Pharoah, but paralyzed all argument by investing his replies in the vagueness of texts, — that Margaret, all gratitude and grief, appeared at the dinner-table with eyes so red as to excite a thousand surmises.

Sir Richard on the other hand was grave and taciturn. His mind was oppressed by all he had seen and heard. Lord Delaville, to whom a family quarrel was by no means a thing difficult to imagine, fancied he was doing a kind thing to both parties by talking incessantly about the morning's diversion, the comparative beauty and tonnage of the yachts engaged; and Camper and White would probably have been somewhat puzzled by certain of the terms employed, and not a few of the criticisms indulged in.

For Margaret was nearly as silent as her husband. If within an hour of the apparently impulsive avowal of attachment made to her by Herbert Fanshawe, she had despatched the express to Dursley by which Sir Richard's presence at Oak Hill was earnestly solicited, on pretence of requiring his interference in Lady Milicent's affairs, she had insured his coming quite as much as a safeguard against herself, as against the renewal of Fanshawe's protestations. In the secrecy of her soul, she felt guilty — convicted — shame-stricken. Of the party at Oak Hill he alone attri-

buted the departure of the delinquent to other than the motives he had chosen to assign. *She* was convinced that he had fled before the face of the man whose hospitality he had sought to betray; and admitted that he had done well.

But had she, in the depths of her soul, nothing to repent and atone? The best of human beings when required to descend, dark lantern in hand, into the gloomy vault of his conscience, is apt to be startled by mouldering skeletons of neglected duties, indelible archives of broken promises and shabby capitulations — if not accomplished, premeditated. Nor could Margaret reflect without a pang, upon the weakness which had allowed her to admit within the flowery walls of her Eden at Oak Hill, that serpent with a smiling face and forked tongue, which had left upon its fair lawn the trail of its sinuous way.

Profoundly degraded in her own estimation, she sat silent and humiliated in presence of her husband; right thankful to the eternal chatter of Lady Delaville, who, after half an hour's dissertation and laying down the law, would, if nobody contradicted her, turn round and occupy another half hour in contradicting herself; and who now so engrossed Sir Richard's attention as to prevent his discerning her want of spirits.

He *did* discern it however; for it was not difficult to look through and listen through the flimsy web of

Lady Delavile's discourse, to objects more interesting in the distance. . But he naturally attributed her sadness to the same cause by which his own spirit was darkened. Sir Richard, like most men of tranquil temperament, entertained an especial horror of insanity. The idea that such a calamity might have been entailed on his posterity, was a source of terror and grief which he could not shake off. He would have given worlds that he had not been compelled to see that gibbering woman, with her glaring eyes and stubbly grey hair. Her incoherent words rang in his ears through all the plausible jabber of Lady Delavile. Heaven above! If he should ever be called upon to behold his beloved Margaret thus horribly visited, — his pretty prattling Mary, — his grave and prematurely reasoning boy! —

It did not at all surprise him to see tears stealing down the cheeks of his lovely wife, as, later in the evening, she sat apart from her guests in the moonlight streaming into the verandah. He would not, however, allow her to give way to melancholy. With such hereditary predispositions, she must not remain much alone. She must not be permitted to fall back upon herself, or indulge in painful reminiscences.

Alas! already the poison he had imbibed was beginning to work. He was already thinking of how she was to be "treated." It was clear he looked upon her as marked out for a dreadful fate, — as an inci-

pient martyr. — And thus, while the gossips on the opposite shore were busied in predicting disunion to Oak Hill, a cause of domestic misery, how far remote from these conjectures, had arisen to cast the shadow of the upas-tree over its once happy roof!

CHAPTER XIV.

Shallow. There are many complaints, Davy, against this Visor: an arrant knave, on my knowledge.

Davy. I grant your worship that he is a knave, Sir; but the knave is mine honest friend, Sir; therefore I beseech your worship, let him be countenanced.

SHAKESPEARE.

It had been settled previous to Sir Richard's departure for the Isle of Wight, that the Clitheroes were to remain at Dursley during his absence. Sir Hurst having to attend at R— one of those public meetings, which affix such fatal manacles to the hands of public men without accomplishing any other purpose; except, perhaps, that of affording an annual safety-valve to the wired-down eloquence of a few local, gas-inflated, demagogues.

Lady Clitheroe was by no means sorry to find herself for a time lady-paramount at Dursley. With all her self-conceit, she had sense to perceive the superiority of Lady Hargreave's household arrangements over her own; and was glad to ascertain, at second-hand, according to her own vulgar phrase, how "things were done" at Morton Castle and Delaville Abbey. Nor was there any personal repugnance to prevent *her* from parading the family carriages and liveries in the High Street of R—, from gossiping with old

Mrs. Pleydell, and her niece, Mrs. Pinhorn; or even endeavouring to extract mischief out of the stern and truthful Mrs. Barnes. On the contrary, as their member's wife, she considered herself as much entitled to inflict daily visits on the inhabitants of R—, as though a gilt pestle and mortar had figured in justification over her door.

Great, therefore, was her vexation when, within four days of his departure for Cowes, Sir Richard not only returned; but returned accompanied by his wife and children. Lady Clitheroe saw in a moment from Margaret's countenance that something was wrong. For in addition to her previous cares, Lady Hargreave had experienced with unusual force in passing the lodge-gates of Dursley, the painful presentiments she had described to her brother. In answer to Emma's pertinacious inquiries, however, she stated only that she had quitted Oak Hill, so suddenly, in obedience to the wish of her husband; and as to questioning *him*, his sister entertained too strong a recollection of the impenetrable and obstinate Dick of earlier days, to hazard any attempt towards decyphering the mystery. She knew that, as the wind bloweth were it listeth, her brother's comings and goings were imperative.

At Cowes, the sudden evaporation of the Oak Hill party proved equally startling. For though it had been always arranged that, immediately after the regatta, the Delaviles were to take their departure for Scot-

land, to enjoy grouse-shooting and deer-stalking in the midst of the fashionable throng assembled at the castle of one of their sons-in-law, — it was difficult to explain why the Nautilus was to be laid up a month before its usual time; or why Oak Hill was to be abruptly reconverted into Paradise Lost. Captain Rhys contrived to extract from the master of the Nautilus that “his horders had been quite hunforseen; that it had hallways been settled for my lady and the young folks to spend the hawtum in the hisland.”

Speaking on which hint, the gallant captain made it — clearly understood at the Club, that Sir Richard Hargreave had stooped like a sea-eagle upon his defenceless home, and carried off his trembling family in his talons. One or two of the married men applauded his spirit; and one or two of the married ladies approved his caution. But not a soul at West Cowes, but was as clearly convinced as if they had witnessed the fact through Lord Rosse's telescope, that a terrible family crisis had occurred on the opposite shore; that Herbert Fanshawe had proved what Chateaubriand's translation of Milton calls the Evil one — *Le mal unique*: an opinion rapidly promulgated throughout the empire, by means of penny-postage, and idle scribblers.

The true motive of Sir Richard's sudden proposition to his wife to return with him to Dursley Park, which *he* considerably attributed to the necessity under which he found himself of being frequently in town

throughout the autumn, as a Commissioner of the Great Exhibition, and his desire that one of the family should in the interim remain at home to inspect the improvements, was his disinclination that Margaret should remain in the vicinity of Laurel Cottage; where Dr. Macwheeble persisted in domiciliating his unfortunate wife.

That Lady Hargreave would return to the spot, he felt certain; and he dreaded the influence on *her* excitable feelings, of what had produced so indelible an impression on his own.

To entrust to his sister Emma a remote hint of such a contingency, was impossible; and in order to silence her officious conjectures, he replied to her inquiries in his surliest and most imperious manner: "Lady Hargreave quitted the Isle of Wight *because I chose it.*" Whereupon Lady Clitheroe, finding Blue Beard in quite as ferocious a mood as the most sister-in-lawish malice could desire, abandoned poor Fatima to her destiny.

This did not prevent her from addressing a letter on the subject to her sister, Lady Arthur; who was feeding her melancholy and the carp in the reservoir of the old castle, at Hombourg les Bains: under much suspicion of designs upon the hand of a German mediatized prince, for whose meagre exchequer her jointure would have created a California.

"Dick and his wife are at Dursley again," wrote

the unscrupulous Emma; "and adding but little to its enlivenment. As your quondam friend Altavilla would say in his delicious French and honeyed accents, 'Je vois bien que quelque chose se passa;' but whether it will pass without a domestic thunder-storm, I cannot pretend to guess. At present, they scarcely speak to each other; and not much to any one else."

To which communication, Lady Arthur replied with sororial tenderness: "I longed to show your letter to William Mordaunt; who passed through this place the other day, in his capacity of national bag-man, on his road to the linen warehouses at Dresden, and Bohemian glass-manufactory at Prague. But I fancy he would be as little able as yourself to afford *le mot de l'énigme*. A clue to the mystery has reached me, however, from a very opposite quarter. You may remember my giving to Lord and Lady Phelim O'Brennan a letter of introduction to Lady Hargreave, when they left London for Ryde at the close of the season; which letter, they took care to leave in proper form at Oak Hill. As Margaret has at command a yacht, and carriage-horses, and saddle-horses, it would have been no great stretch of politeness, had she made an excursion of half-a-dozen miles to return their visit. But though she was never at the trouble of making out Brigstock Terrace, rumours concerning her were not equally slow in finding their way. Dick, like a blind mole as he is, has been entertaining not only Herbert

Fanshawe under his roof, it seems, but all Cowes at his expense. Margaret proves, after all, to be a *Tartuffe en falbalas*! To think that, while pretending such affection for her husband and children, she should have been keeping up that flirtation before the flood, with Fanshawe; — a man whose mind is in so advanced a state of decomposition, that no sanatory commission would undertake to purify the atmosphere corrupted by his presence. For mercy's sake, keep an eye upon them! Do not allow her to expose herself and us. No need for our family name, though it may not be inscribed in Doomsday Book, to be dragged through the mire by these Mordaunts."

Fortified by such a missive, Lady Clitheroe did not fail to play the Emma of other times to the Margaret of other times, who was now Lady Hargreave of Dursley Park. Whenever occasion offered, the forked tongue of the adder darted forth. She did not scruple to introduce the name of Herbert Fanshawe into the conversation, by way of torture to Margaret, as much *à-propos de bottes* as some Latin citation in the speech of a county member. Nor did Sir Richard ever fail to answer to the cue; frequently expressing wonder whether their friend had obtained the appointment he was expecting: probably not; for brilliant men like Herbert Fanshawe were seldom made available by Government. Government was afraid of introducing squibs and crackers too near their powder magazine.

On such occasions, Lady Clitheroe looked through and through poor Margaret, as if invoking the walls of Dursley to fall and cover the family shame.

A sort of choke-damp was beginning to annihilate the spirits of the party, when by that great good Luck, which Champfort calls the *subriquet* of Providence, — Ralph Hargreave suddenly made his appearance among them. It was as the apparition of a good spirit in a pantomime, in spangled tights and with a silver wand, to restore everything and everybody to order. He brought reality, where romance had prevailed — he brought truth — he brought conviction. Emma Clitheroe trembled at the sight of him. For she knew that his fearless nature never hesitated to call things by their right names; or to judge people by their real intentions.

His business at Dursley, however, was neither to intimidate a hypocritical woman, nor sustain an oppressed one. It was of a far more comprehensive nature. Standing largely committed towards an important, a wealthy, an enlightened constituency as regarded the prospects of the Exhibition, the construction of which was now in advanced progress, he wanted to ascertain from his kinsman the exact views and intentions of the commission, as regarded both the exhibitors and the public. The tangible interests of hundreds of enterprizing manufacturers — of thousands of industrious workmen — hung on the information demanded; and

had any one, at that juncture, interposed into the discussion the name of a next-to-nothing like Herbert Fanshawe, Ralph would probably have saluted it with a burst of expletives scarcely fit for audition by ears polite.

To afford him the verifications so honestly insisted upon, Sir Richard entreated his cousin to accompany him to town, whither he must repair in a few days; not a little stimulated in his haste to quit Dursley by his dislike of the empty pomposities of Sir Hurst Clitheroe.

Unluckily for all parties, however, there arrived, previous to his departure for town, a letter from Mildenhall Abbey; proposing on the part of the Viscount a visit from himself, his Viscountess, and two of his progeny, in requital for that paid him by the Hargreaves the preceding year.

"No, by Jove! It can't and shan't be!" was Dick Hargreave's unceremonious rejoinder, when the proposition was recited to him, in presence of the Clitheroes. "Tell your brother, Margaret, that we are going to London. Tell him we are going to the devil. Tell him what you will; only within these doors he and his do not enter till I see cause to issue a fiat to the contrary!"

This tirade sounded as if harshly intended towards Margaret; regarding as it did the son of her father, the representative of her father's house. It was, on

the contrary, a demonstration of martial fondness; or, as Wordsworth says of the

Instinctive tenderness, the same
Which is in the blood of all.

Sir Richard had not forgiven, and could not forgive, the answer made by Lord Mildenhall to his appeal for co-operation in behalf of Lady Millicent Macwheeble; that "it was Sir Richard's exclusive business to assist her; that Margaret, the only person who had benefited by Lady Bournemouth's fortune and consequence, was the only member of the family whom it behoved to trouble herself with the care and comfort of the lunatic."

Such was the motive of his ungraciousness towards his wife's brother, which Emma saw fit to interpret into jealous resentment; and which even Ralph Hargreave knew not how to account for. He was afraid something must be wrong between the wedded pair, whose unanimity was one of the dearest wishes of his heart.

If the present age of velocity and acceleration have its evils, let us give it the full benefit of its advantages. — Its impressions are more transitory than those of slower times, its grievances less lasting. — By the time Dick Hargreave was whirled to London, he had forgotten Lord Mildenhall. Even the woeeful image of the haggard old aunt of his Margaret faded

from his mind, when he came within scope of that varied, potent, influential throng of London life; whose busy hum is probably as grand a chorus as was ever achieved by the great orchestra of human nature. (Sir) Richard was himself again, the moment that, arm-in-arm with his energetic cousin, he set foot in his crowded club in Pall Mall, the very focus of intellectual agitation.

Though pheasant-shooting had begun, London was as crowded as in July. Curiosity was on tiptoe concerning the great work in progress; and the opposition of a few egotists, and not a few humbugs, served only to cheer on the zeal of those intent upon forwarding so grand an effort of civilization. Not alone commissioners, not alone committee men, like the two Hargreaves, but every individual of spirit and enlightenment in the kingdom, was exerting himself or promoting the exertions of others, in so important a cause. The triflers who derided the whole affair as a gigantic peep-show, little understood with what noble and far-sighted views it was forwarded by the true friends of the human race.

"I am sorry to meet you in London, Hargreave," said Lord Fitzmorton, one of the first persons he ran against in the library; "for my mother has just addressed an invitation to yourself and Lady Hargreave for Monday next, to spend a few days. We shall have

a pleasant party, which you would have enjoyed and enhanced."

"I am here for a fortnight at least," replied Sir Richard; "but my wife need not be debarred the pleasure of a visit to Morton Castle. My sister and Sir Hurst leave Dursley on Saturday; and Lady Hargreave will be quite at liberty."

"Then sit down and write her a line by to-day's post, like a good fellow, as you are; and leave her at liberty no longer. Lay your conjugal commands upon her to join our party at Morton."

"Spoken, my dear Fitzmorton, like a bachelor, as you are. I trust I know better!" replied Sir Richard, laughing. "I was just about to announce to her, however, my safe arrival in town; and will not fail to beg that she will consult her own inclinations on the subject of your invitation; a sure guide to Morton Castle."

Before this letter arrived, Margaret had despatched her acceptance; chiefly to insure herself against any proposal on the part of the Clitheroes to extend their protracted visit. But a sojourn at Morton Castle was never a waste of time. The host himself was an agreeable, lively, popular man, whose shallowness of intellect was never remarkable, because he did not pretend to be deep; and though no one took kinder care of his own comfort, he was equally careful of the comfort of others. Among his many good qualities, was a warm

affection for his only sister, Lady Emily, for whose amusement, when she came with her mother to visit his bachelor palace, these parties at Morton Castle were devised.

He was vexed that his handsome sister should be like himself, unmarried at thirty. But as in his own case, it was a matter of choice. Many pretendants had sought her hand; and all in vain. From the period when Sir Thomas Hargreave marked her down for a daughter-in-law, she had dismissed as many suitors or Penelope. Some people, (including Mrs. Brampton Brylls of Bryllholm Place, whose son was among the rejected,) sneeringly declared that Lady Emily was too clever by half; that she was vain, proud, fastidious and fantastical. Others whispered that she had a secret attachment. Her brother was simply of opinion, that she was too honest-hearted to marry unless her whole heart could accompany the gift of her hand.

Whatever the cause of her celibacy, it certainly did not weigh on her spirits; for few of the guests at Morton could compete with her witty though somewhat sarcastic sallies. To Lady Hargreave, she was sincerely attached; at once admiring and loving her ladylike simplicity of manners and character. In her, there was none of that straining after effect, which is the besetting sin of the Dursley Park order of society. Not a word, not a gesture ever escaped her, which the purest taste could have disavowed.

"I am so glad, so *very* glad you are come," said Lady Emily rushing forward to embrace her in the inner vestibule of the hall. "Fitzmorton arrived from town last night, and endeavoured to persuade us that you were established with Sir Richard in Whitehall Gardens; assisting to hatch this wonderful Roc's egg of a Crystal Palace."

"But you did not seriously believe that I was going to break my engagement?"

"No, no! Mr. Fanshawe, who luckily accompanied my brother, told us the truth: that Sir Richard, though in town, was as completely a widower as Orpheus; and going about from club to club, singing

Che farò senza Euridice!

Lady Hargreave had scarcely got over the shock of hearing that Fanshawe was in the house, and the vexation of finding that he had been talking of her with levity, when she had to undergo her formal welcome from Lady Fitzmorton; a fat, good-humoured old lady, with a double chin, and housekeeper-looking cap and plum-coloured silk gown; whose chief care in life was to prevent people from sitting in draughts, walking out in thin shoes, or running any other risk of taking cold. She loved to talk over with Lady Hargreave, who was a first favourite, the remedies to be employed when her children should have the measles or chicken-pox: and as a prudent, sensible young

woman, who never smiled at her precautions, she considered the Dean's daughter a far safer companion for her own, than the flighty family at Delavile Abbey.

"My son, with Captain Rhys and Mr. Fanshawe, (old yachting friends, my dear Lady Hargreave, when Fitzmorton made that foolish expedition up the Nile, and caught that dreadful fever), have been shooting all day in the Rixford coverts," said she, by way of explaining Lord Fitzmorton's absence.

"Mr. Fanshawe, then, has not yet obtained the appointment he was expecting?" inquired Margaret, dreading lest the variations of her complexion should become apparent to the sagacious eye of Lady Emily.

"What appointment, my dear Lady Hargreave?" said the good-humoured dowager, who, devoid of the boss of eventuality, cared little and knew less about what was going on beyond the limits of her family circle.

"Mr. Fanshawe has long been soliciting an envoyship, Mamma," interrupted her daughter. "Don't you remember the Duke of Merioneth telling us, at Delavile Abbey, that they had been promised the first which fell vacant?" —

"The Duke of Merioneth, with fifty thousand a-year, applying for an envoyship, my dear? — Impossible."

"For his cousin, Mr. Fanshawe, Mamma."

"When Mr. Fanshawe was with us, at Cowes,"

said Lady Hargreave, as calmly as she could, "he fully expected to spend the winter at Italy."

"He was too sanguine, I am afraid," rejoined Lady Emily. "It is pretty certain, however, that he will succeed to Sir Robert Branhholm, whenever that worthy gentleman makes up his mind to pack up his medals and cameos and come back to the old England where he is neither known nor wanted. But though as old as Nestor and almost as prosy, the only words Sir Robert cannot get himself to pronounce are 'I resign;' and poor Mr. Fanshawe is consequently kept dangling in the air, like a spider hanging to its thread."

Nothing very sentimental in all this. Nothing at all resembling the courtship of which Herbert Fanshawe had afforded hints to Sir Richard Hargreave. There was not, however, much time to reflect upon it. The gong had already sounded, and the rest of the party dispersed to dress for dinner.

When Lady Hargreave returned to the drawing-room, the first object that met her eye was Lady Emily seated on an opposite sofa, her flowing flaxen ringlets enveloping her fair face in a cloud of light, and affording stronger relief to the dark well-turned head and well-curled sable whiskers of Herbert Fanshawe, as close to her side as though they had been sitting to Wyon for a double medallion! No sooner had Margaret taken her seat among the matrons of the party, than he rose, glided across the room, and having ex-

tended his hand in salutation, bowed over that which she could not withhold, with the most Grandisonian politeness; then, with equal ceremony, retreated to the place from whence he came. It fell to his share, that is, he *made* it fall to his share, to take out Lady Emily to dinner. But as the party consisted at present of only ten persons, the conversation became general; and, as is usually the case in such parties, both sociable and pleasant. There was no effort, no attempt at wit. Lord Fitzmorton would have scorned to invite to his table a monkey-man, of the Barty Tomlinson or Early Intelligence class, to entertain his company. *His* guests were his friends; far more capable of deriving pleasure from each other's simple conversation, than from the commonplace book stories and gingered repartees of a *pique-assiette*.

This was much to Herbert Fanshawe's advantage; who, unless when spurred into unnatural efforts by antagonism, was one of the pleasantest companions in the world. His tone was so exactly modulated to the pitch-pipe of the society he frequented! His anecdotes were so new and so telling. He had been familiar in his own and foreign countries, with so many of those whose lives form a matter of history, whose habits are such matter of interest. When disposed to afford information, he did not come down upon you, after the fashion of Ralph Hargreave; insisting on your seeing with his eyes and believing with his faith — like a

Roman centurion converting one of Alaric's Goths at the point of the spear. On the contrary, he shed so much of the *soave licor* of sophistry, on the *orli del vaso*, that people swallowed his brilliant arguments without wincing. Even when tempted to be sarcastic, Fanshawe's satire was of so polished a nature, that the iron entered your soul without your perceiving it. As the executioner's wife, in the time of Louis XIII., said of the "sweet performances" of her husband, "he cut off your head so dexterously, that you were unaware of the blow; till, on shaking it, it rolled at your feet."

Lady Hargreave was vexed with herself for being carried away by his brilliant sallies. Still more vexed with *him*, when, on endeavouring to enter into conversation with her neighbour Lord Fitzmorton, in order not to appear too deeply engrossed by that of the pseudo-envoy, he instantly stopped short with pretended deference, to listen; thereby fixing upon her slightest remark, the attention of the whole party. She had little doubt that the annoyance was intentional. For, throughout the evening, as well as the chatty pleasant breakfast of the following morning, not a word did he address to her. His homage was exclusively for the brilliant and beautiful Lady Emily Morton.

"Charming fellow, is he not?" said Lord Fitzmorton, cordially, as he presented to Lady Hargreave on the second night of her visit, the bed candle and

glass of iced water she asked for. "We generally have recourse to a game at Post, or Racing, or *jeux innocens* of some kind or other, to get through the evening at the Castle, when there is a formal party. But, by Jove! with Fanshawe in the house, nothing of the kind is wanted. He carries one through the day before one fancies it has begun!"

"Mr. Fanshawe has been particularly entertaining this evening," said Lady Hargreave coldly.

"He is no favourite of yours, I see. Married women in general are afraid of his leading their husbands into mischief. A sad dog, I'm afraid, — a terrible flirt, — a ruthless Massacrer of the Innocents, — is my friend Fanshawe! — But somehow or other, he is the sort of Prodigio whose return every body welcomes — a fatal encouragement to his levity! — For the next twenty years, he won't be a day older than twenty."

Amiable, but credulous Lord of Morton Castle! — The son of Sir Claude Fanshawe, — in his very cradle *désabusé du monde*, — had attained before he began to dog'sear his Eton grammar, the uncomputable years of Thomas Parr! —

CHAPTER XV.

Like vapour from the mountain stream art thou,
Which softly rises on the morning air
And shifts its form with every shifting breeze —
Endearing, generous, bountiful, and kind,
Vain, credulous, and fond of worthless praise.
Courteous and gentle, proud — magnificent —
And yet these adverse qualities in thee,
No dissonance, nor striking contrast make.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

CAPTAIN RHYS who, though too much a man of the world to run the risk of disturbing the good understanding of a pleasant party by hinting, even in the most confidential confidence, all that had been privately circulated at Cowes concerning Fanshawe and the Dean's daughter, was not the less amazed at the estrangement ostensibly existing between parties. He was perfectly cognizant of the *sang froid* of Fanshawe's nature; and that he would have betrayed no surprise on suddenly finding himself, nose to trunk, with an elephant. Still, the ceremonious politeness with which he had saluted Lady Hargreave the evening of his arrival, was so little reconcileable with the attitude in which he had himself discovered them on the pine-bench at Oak Hill, that his best of Latin failed to explain the mystery. Nor was it more satisfactorily interpreted when, on the third day of their visit, he suddenly came upon them

in one of the least frequented parts of the American garden, engaged in earnest conversation; Lady Hargreave holding an open letter in her hand.

He thanked goodness, or badness, as a discreet gentleman naturally would, that the splendid growth of the rhododendrons and azaleas enabled him to strike into another walk, unnoticed by the delinquents. If, however, instead of stealing away in an opposite direction, he had joined them in their promenade, the fact of their being together would have explained itself. Margaret had started for a walk in the grounds, before the arrival of the second post, which on that day made its appearance somewhat earlier than usual; and when the letter-bag was opened in the library by Lady Emily, during the absence of her brother, a letter addressed to Lady Hargreave in a child's handwriting, afforded to Fanshawe a passport to reconciliation such as was not to be neglected.

It was much to his credit, for a man so heartless, that he understood the value to a mother's heart of one of those clumsily-folded epistles, directed in crooked lines and a round-text hand, and not a little peculiar in its orthography — in the concoction of which it is clear that neither tutor nor governess could claim a share. A despatch from the seat of war — a letter marked private and confidential on H.M.S., — could not command prompter attention.

Having hurried off in the direction pointed out by

the hall porter as that Lady Hargreave had taken, Fanshawe managed to meet her in the American Gardens, breathless from haste in her service. Lord Fitzmorton, had he been the messenger, would have hastened away faster than he came; to allow her time to read her letter in comfort. But Fanshawe followed her composedly at the distance of a few paces; and when she had reached the signature of little Mary's epistle, advanced to profit by the glow of satisfaction that lighted up her features.

"You look so happy, dearest Lady Hargreave," said he, "that even a trespasser like myself may surely aspire to a brief moment of mercy. It was to sue for it, indeed, that I came to Morton Castle. I knew I should find you here, and for years we may not meet again. Is it asking too much then to entreat your pardon for a few rash words, wrung from me in a moment of desperation; never — believe me on my word and faith — never, never again to be repeated." —

"I have no wish to disbelieve you, Mr. Fanshawe," replied Lady Hargreave, amazed and embarrassed. "Let the subject drop, and be forgotten."

"Forgotten — no! Forgotten — *never!* But remembered with sincerest repentance and truest gratitude," replied Fanshawe, speaking almost under her bonnet. "Did you know, could you possibly imagine, all I have suffered in consequence of your displeasure,

since I saw you last, you would feel, dearest Lady Hargreave, that your present clemency is not wholly thrown away."

"And yet, since my arrival here," rejoined his companion, "I have seen little to induce me to suppose that your mind was otherwise than perfectly at ease — *perfectly* happy!"

"Touched, poor soul!" was the secret ejaculation of Fanshawe. "As jealous, *almost*, as I could wish! — You will readily believe," he continued, aloud, "that my first object is to divert suspicion from the real and sole purpose of my visit here. Fitzmorton is a good-natured fellow; but he saw enough of my state of mind when he carried me off from Paris to the Mediterranean, ten years ago, not to possess a ready clue, dear Margaret, to any disturbance of feeling I may betray in your company. Forgive — forgive me. — It was an oversight," said he, on finding her startled by his familiarity. "I will not again offend."

No answer was vouchsafed him. His companion felt that he was over-passing the limits she had assigned him. But emotion, of some kind or other, kept her silent.

"You, Marg — you, Lady Hargreave, who have led a life of tranquil felicity," he continued, "are scarcely a competent judge of feelings keen as mine. In *my* cup of destiny, the too brief happiness of other days has deposited lees of bitterness, which mar the

aims and ends of life. People do not die, Margaret, of such afflictions. — No! In these times, we rally, and look misfortune in the face. But between death and the real enjoyment of life, there is a wide and miserable barrier. Look!" said he, stopping short, and pointing out a fine kalmia in the shrubbery, which, from removal, or an unfavourable soil, was exhibiting a mass of yellow fading leaves, and an untimely blossom or two, amidst the bright evergreens by which it was surrounded. "Like yonder half-blighted tree, are my abortive character and prospects. But for the dread of injuring you by my presence in England when it pleased Heaven to remove your father, I should have returned at once, to occupy a seat in Parliament offered by my kinsman the Duke of Merioneth; and, by this time, might have accomplished some distinguished administrative post, enabling me to serve my country in her onward march of aggrandizement. Instead of this, Margaret, forced into a diplomatic career, that I might stifle my disappointments in foreign countries and avoid all further danger of injury to the being I loved best on earth, — my youth was consigned to an idle, frivolous state of existence, in the most corrupt capitals in Europe; without a guide — without a pole-star — without hope — without affection! What chance, then, that I should preserve my nature from degradation, my soul pure, my heart holy? — I plunged into excesses expressly to harden and embrutify myself. I cared

not to preserve the right feelings, the fond sentiments, the high aspirations of my youth, which there was none to share. I closed my eyes to the fair frame of nature — the beautiful scenery of the lands in which I was abiding. I seemed to fear lest the glories of creation should regenerate me; and, by expanding my mind, render the void within still wider — still more desolate. — For, in the midst of all this misery and bitterness — ay, and wickedness — I loved you. Margaret, — loved you still, — as few were ever loved, as few so loved, ever love in return!"

A smothered sigh — almost a sob — escaped the oppressed bosom of Lady Hargreave. Could it be to her, accustomed only to the most prosaic routine of daily life, that this impassioned invocation was addressed? Could it be her very self, so coolly, calmly regarded by those nearest and dearest to her, who had been thus exclusively, thus fatally beloved? —

"*Château qui parle ou femme qui écoute.*" thought Fanshawe, reverting to the proverb, as he watched her pause of deliberation, and resumed his flowery protestations, in the self-same tones in which Edmund Kean, as the guileful Richard, used to subjugate the ear of gentle Lady Anne. And Margaret — woe the while! — inclined her ear to listen. Human vanity, seduced, left its porch unguarded, to admit the leperous distilment of the poisoner.

We, at least, in our turn, are not compelled to

listen. No good purpose is accomplished by dwelling on moments of temptation, when the struggle between our good and evil angels becomes a doubtful strife. But let him who standeth, take heed lest he fall; and let him who standeth, deal mercifully with the fallen.

A vivid flush, partly of shame, partly of pleasure, arising as much from the confessions to which she had been forced to listen, as to those she had allowed herself to make, burned on the cheek of Lady Hargreave; when, as they approached the house, she encountered Lady Emily, with two or three others of the party, coming in search of her.

"Captain Rhys told us, dear Lady Hargreave, that we should find you in the American shrubberies," said she. "And here we are, with another letter brought by the bag; which Mr. Fanshawe pretended was too heavy for him to carry."

"Familiar of old with my friend Mordaunt's clerkly manuscript and lengthy style," said the accused, "I did not choose that Lady Hargreave should experience any such drawback upon the pleasure of dwelling, again and again, on a welcome little letter from home."

"Too true! — I'm afraid children are one's pleasantest correspondents," said Lady Emily, addressing the rest of the party, while Margaret was examining a voluminous packet, bearing the Roman post-mark. "Children are not only merry and wise, but too merry

to be *too* wise: — happy birds, who mistake every season for spring, and sing the whole year round!”

“Grave philosophy, dear Lady Emily, for the lips which give it utterance,” observed Fanshawe, attaching himself to her side, after ascertaining, by a furtive glance, that Lady Hargreave had stolen away, and re-entered the house, for the perusal of her brother’s letter. “How long is it, may I ask, since your sprightly ladyship enlisted under the banner of the Neri?” —

“When the head grows white, ’t is time its reflections should darken. My maid pointed out to me, alas! this morning half-a-dozen grey hairs in these miserable streamers,” replied Lady Emily, passing her hand lightly through the long, fair ringlets escaping from her straw bonnet.

“You make me tremble!” cried Fanshawe, with well-acted dismay. “If *you* have accomplished grey hairs, *I*, your senior, must make up my mind to baldness; to disguise which, a vagabond like myself must have recourse to Sir Hurst Clitheroe’s caoutchoc wig, instead of pretending to the laurel wreath which, pedants assure us, was invented to cover the naked poll of Julius Cæsar. No matter! Let us see things, *en beau*, as long as we can. When evening really arrives, time enough for the shadows of life to lengthen, and darken our hearts.

"*Parlez pour vous!*" said Lady Emily. "I mean to attain a chirrupping old age! My phosphoric gaiety shines only in the dark. If, like the sick animals in Peru, who accomplish their own cure by gnawing the bark of the quinine-tree, (whatever it may please to call itself in the lingo of botanic pedantry), I have strengthened my mind by mastication of bitter food, I see no reason why I should not profit by my experience. Portia's wig and gown do not make her an hour the older, whatever their influence in convicting the miserly Jew."

Fanshawe was a little puzzled. Though a master of the art of irony, Lady Emily Morton was as much beforehand with him as in such trivialities as a shrewd woman ever excels a clever man. He was not quite sure, therefore, but that, having discovered the game he was playing with Lady Hargreave, she was not making him her butt. But he was one of those who, in such dilemmas, charge straight to the front.

"Lady Hargreave has deserted us, I see," said he, pretending to look round, and to discern only the group of loungers of whom they were fifty yards in advance. "The fair Margaret has retreated into the solitude of her chamber, to try and work herself over Mordaunt's epistle into a fit of sentiment, as she did over the nonsense verses of her little girl. Poor dear Lady Hargreave! She makes it as much her duty to cultivate the domestic affections, as a Scotch gardener

to force his kail and asparagus for Christmas Day. The Deanery of R—, however, was not much of a hot-bed for the human heart. Dean Mordaunt was a selfish old fellow; and his cold bloodedness has yielded a notable crop in Lord Mildenhall; compared to whom a stock-fish is marrow. As to his charming sister, a homeless loveless childhood has, I fear, produced a mere automaton. Pleasing as she is, Lady Hargreave is as cold as a stone."

"Cold, or warm, or tepid, I love her dearly," replied Lady Emily, with spirit. "I detest the mania for hair-splitting analysis now so prevalent, which serves only to depreciate merit and crush all honest enthusiasm. Too much criticism is spoiling our literature; too much criticism is spoiling our society. I have not been half so fond of flowers since I was beguiled by Lady Delaville into attending a botanical lecture; where I saw the beauties of the parterre dissected, petal by petal, and coldly pored and prosed over. No, no, Mr. Fanshawe! an anatomist may be excused for endeavouring, through the contours of the Venus de Medicis, to trace her skeleton. But don't let us play so barbarous a part to a woman deserving the utmost admiration we can accord her."

It was difficult for even Herbert Fanshawe not to admire the grace and spirit with which the foils were wielded by Lady Emily Morton as the champion of her rival. Her fine eyes seemed to give out sparks

of electricity, like a tiger's back under provocation. He contented himself, however, with reflection when the rest of the party halted to admire a border of beautiful chrysanthemums, bursting into bloom: — "a charming girl, certainly; a companion qualified to keep one's wits awake. — Somewhat different from the dear, placid, meaningless Dudù of Dursley Park. — Well, well! 't is labour lost to think about her. — Ten thousand pounds, and helpless hands, would never do for a miserable dog like myself; who, for any droits of primogeniture, might as well have been born, like Pains, a second brother."

Margaret, meanwhile, proceeded, a little too leisurely, perhaps, to examine her brother's letter. For on attaining the solitude of her chamber, instead of immediately breaking the seal, she began, even before she laid aside her bonnet and cloak, to reconsider all she had been hearing, and all, or nearly all, she had said in return. She was thoroughly conscious of her fault. She did not sin blindly. But like victims to the first fumes of intoxication, she was surrounded by so delusive a world of novel impressions, that she did not even wish to recover her reason. Her solitude was peopled with fairy forms, elves, sprites, — the luminous atoms that swarm in the sunshine of the lover and the poet; and she sat herself down with her hands clasped over her eyes, not to exclude, but to enjoy the spectacle of their antics. Oh! who will

whisper to her infatuated soul a form of exorcism to expel such delusions for evermore! —

William Mordaunt's letter ran some risk of being forgotten. Nor was it till the day had so far closed that she was forced to have recourse to the candles on the toilet-table to peruse it, that Lady Hargreave laboured through the following pages.

"I have not written to you regularly, dearest Margaret, because, having many matters of business on which I am forced to correspond with Richard and Ralph, I entertain no doubt that my itinerary duly reaches your darling ladyship through their hands, and obtains interest by the transmission. It is time, however, that I addressed a word or two to yourself; to palliate, though not obviate, the proverbial destiny of the absent — of being always in the wrong. My first news is, that, to repay me for any difficulties or privations I may have undergone, besides that of losing your company, my mission has been perfectly successful. I am a pragmatistical ass, however, to talk about privations; when my tour has been, in fact, a series of triumphs. Not the least among them is that of finding our National Exhibition the object of universal enthusiasm. Even those who were, at first, cautious of co-operation, have been completely won over by the exquisite plans of the Crystal Palace which have lately reached us. I can scarcely tell you, dear Mar-

garet, how Paxton's notion has charmed me! But you, who know of old, that if I enter into a project at all, I do it with my whole heart and soul; or, as Ralph Hargreave would say, that, if I plunge at all, I take a header, — will readily understand my gratification at being saluted with salvos of applause, instead of the feeble "we will see," which my proposals at first met with. But even of the Crystal Palace, at present, enough. Let me now talk of you and yours; or, as might be expected of so bold an egotist, first, of myself. I shall not be with you at Christmas, dearest sister. I cannot be in England before the meeting of Parliament. I, as faithful to your fire-side at the grand festival of the year, as its holly or mince-pies, must be at Marseilles or Lyons, when you are listening to those precious Dursley waits, whose serpent makes me hiss to think of. Let me, however, be in your champagne-cup freshly remembered; or, like Banquo's ghost, my fetch shall walk in and occupy my vacant chair.

"I heard much talk of you at Naples, darling; — yes, at Naples. From an adorer, too. But don't puzzle your brains to guess his name. You never saw him; and, in that, have sustained little loss. But, though no Adonis, your Pastor Fido is a prodigious man in his own esteem: one Prince Rafiarelli, who swears he fell in love with you, last year, at some Court *fête*. 'I never saw your beautiful Lady Agraffe but once,'

said he. 'I never met her *dans la haute*; and my friend Altavilla, who knows her well, explained that she did not exactly belong to the *grand monde*, but was a *noblesse de bourse*.' The impudent varlets! However, on finding that I had the honour of being brother to your *beaux yeux*, (such a pair of miserable grey eyes as they are!) the Prince made me free of his palaces, galleries, villas, and, *ahimè!* of his very tedious company — for he is a regular *incommodo*, and not at all likely to find it out.

"Apropos of Altavilla. When I first stumbled against him at the San Carlo, he made me as stiff a bow as Sir Hurst Clitheroe would bestow upon a man who had just passed through Basinghall Street: evidently afraid of having to answer for me in society, or bestow a dish of macaroni on me in return for all the turtle administered to him by the house of Hargreave. But, on finding that I wanted neither his notice nor a dinner, — that is, on meeting me at Temple's, and learning that my errand at Naples was partly a Government mission, — he became as *affettuoso* as ever; and would fain have wrapped me up in cotton, like the trinkets he is so fond of displaying. His cat-like, stealthy movements appear to me, in his native climate, more feline than ever.

"Tell Ralph Hargreave, if he is with you (as I hope for you cannot be too much together), that a forced march through Austria and Italy, such as I

have undergone, would reconcile him to all the little stains and blemishes he is so fond of discovering and endeavouring to efface, in the institutions of our dear old England. Half my pleasure, in my tour, has been invalidated by the traces visible at every step, of the outrages and outbreaks of the last two years. To look on this country now, is like surveying a beautiful corpse, disfigured by the gashes of the assassin. Oh! dear Margaret, we have much to be thankful for, that we live in an island blest, with a liberal Constitution and a popular Sovereign. For a land to be happy, loyalty should form a predominant element of its atmosphere. In Naples, how is this to be?

"But *are* we sufficiently thankful? Do we recognise, day by day, the great blessings conferred upon us? I say 'we,' my Margaret, in a private, rather than a national sense; for since I have been roaming about the world, it has often, often recurred to my mind, from how much misery we two were redeemed by the affection of that best of good fellows, whose name you bear. A few moments of our lives bore so dark a complexion, Meg, that the sunshine in which we are basking demands a double share of gratitude. We must not quite forget that grim old Deanery. I shall not be at R— this winter, and therefore delegate to your hands my annual gift to old Harman and his cross wife; and my visit to the excellent Dean, whom from my soul I thank and reverence, for his de-

"*Why* do I receive him as an inmate? *Why*, *why*?" murmured she. "It becomes my brother to inquire! — *Who* goaded me into a marriage with one for whom, *he knew*, I never entertained that warm affection which is the safe-guard of married life? — William is aware that the Hargreaves were always my enemies; and now wonders that they malign me! — He means well — means kindly. But I am no longer a child to be lectured out of friendships that please me, and acquaintanceships which console me for my banishment from that world, in which, as Lord Mildenhall's sister, I am entitled to move, were I not branded (as his Neapolitan friend has informed him), as a *noblesse de bourse*!"

Lady Hargreave was piqued by every line of her brother's letter, — at Refiarelli's impertinence, and the conference concerning her failings, held with the frivolous Julia. But above all, she was piqued against Margaret Lady Hargreave; for having hearkened to the voice of the charmer, and sunk in her own esteem.

It was no frailty of the senses, which was obtaining dominion over her. It was the foolish romance of false sentiment; — the upstarting flame of a long-smouldering first love, imperfectly extinguished in her girlhood.

That night, when she retired to rest, Mrs. Harston, now a portly spinster but still her faithful attendant, inquired somewhat anxiously, as she was placing her

ladyship's magnificent rings in their morocco-case, what had become of a small engraved antique sapphire, said to have belonged to Mary Queen of Scots (as is usually said of all curious old rings), one of the few hereditary treasures of Margaret Mordaunt, which had disappeared from the ring-box.

"It is gone, Harston. — You can put one of the other rings from my jewel box into the vacant place."

"*Gone*, my lady? Lost, and her ladyship take it so quietly? — A ring which her ladyship so much valued! — Would my lady give her leave to make inquiries about it in the house?"

No! Her ladyship wished to hear nothing further on the subject. "No one was in fault. It had not been lost at Morton Castle."

Would that it had been lost! — It was the donor not the ring, whose safety was in danger. —

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less, but which like counters at play, are worth thousands to the players!

Ralph perceived nothing of what was passing. Blest with a peculiarly voluble wife, he saw, perhaps, no fault in Margaret's taciturnity.

"I forwarded you a letter from your brother, to Morton Castle," said Sir Richard, when the servants disappeared at dessert. "Rome, I think, was the post-mark. Is he on his way home?"

"A letter from Mordaunt?" interrupted Ralph Hargreave. "The idle dog has not written *me* a line for weeks past! Do let us see the letter, Margaret. Or if it contain family secrets," he continued, noticing her sudden flush, "read us such passages as concern the community in general."

"William merely informed me that his journey had accomplished all its objects," said Lady Hargreave, coldly; "and that he should be back before the meeting of Parliament."

"Willy must have grown a shocking prosy fellow," observed Sir Richard, "if that was all the information he managed to afford in a packet on which I had to place half-a-dozen blue stamps!"—

"You scarcely wish, I should imagine, to hear all the idle gossip of Austria and Italy?" observed Lady Hargreave.

"I do, and am not ashamed to own it," said Ralph. "It is by straws of that nature thrown into the air,

that one learns which way the wind blows. I want immensely to learn how King Bomba is going on."

"In that case, I am sorry that I have destroyed my brother's letter," said Lady Hargreave, coldly.

"*Destroyed* it, and Willy still away? — Well! I wonder at your courage!"

"My wife never was a hoarder of letters," interposed Sir Richard in an apologetic tone. "I doubt whether, at this moment, she has half-a-dozen in her possession."

The accusing colour rose to Margaret's temples. She remembered only too accurately, exactly how many were contained in her ebony casket.

"And if we want Italian news," added her husband, perceiving that his cousin's questioning annoyed his wife, "we must soon apply to Fanshawe. I see by the papers that his appointment is all but certain."

"By the papers, quotha! Dick my boy! Will you *ever* come to years of discretion? Will you *ever* put away childish things? Havn't you *vous* to perceive that these announcements in the papers are merely feelers, put forth by Fanshawe's friends of the press, to satisfy Government that his appointment would be universally popular? — Do you suppose our friend Herbert would have wasted so much time in toadying editors and sub-editors, unless with this object in view?" —

"Mr. Fanshawe, whom I left to-day at Morton Castle," said Lady Hargreave, almost haughtily, "is,

I believe, entirely indebted for his appointment to the interest of his cousin the Duke of Merioneth."

"He *is* appointed then?" — rejoined Ralph, coolly.

"Well, for *his* sake, I'm glad of it; and a little, perhaps, for ours; for between ourselves, Fanshawe's a dangerous fellow. I could as soon make a pet of a fish, or reptile. As to the Duke of Merioneth obtaining an embassy for him, the days are done when dukes could do anything of the kind. It is as much as they can manage to obtain office for themselves. Old Merioneth is not a borough-holder, and does not tell exorbitantly even in his own county. I'm not sure that I would accept *his* influence in exchange for *ours*."

Sir Richard was silent; pondering, perhaps, on the possibility that Margaret's renewed intimacy with Fanshawe, at Morton Castle, might have exercised some influence in the extraordinary change perceptible in her deportment. She was grown abrupt, flighty; her cheek was flushed, her eye wild, her — speech incoherent. Sorely against his will, her strangeness recalled to his mind the terrible visitation of Lady Millicent Macwheeble. He would almost rather have believed that Fanshawe had temporarily inspired her with some of his fantastic impertinence of fashionable pretension, than that such a calamity should be impending.

"What is the matter with her? — She is not her-

self to-night," — said Ralph, when Lady Hargreave left them to their wine.

"Nothing is the matter with her that I know of. But, now and then, after giving free course to her aristocratic instincts among such people as the Fitzmortons and Delaviles I'm afraid poor Margaret feels some repulsion on returning to her plebeian husband. Do you remember Hoffman's story, Ralph, of the Swedish girl who married the merman?"

"Nonsense, nonsense!"

"Nonsense, in your teeth, my doughty cousin," rejoined Dick, with a good-humoured smile, filling, for each, a bumper of fragrant claret. "Margaret and I are, and have ever been, God be thanked, the best of friends. But we always understand each other more satisfactorily when Willy Mordaunt is at hand to serve as our mutual interpreter. You know — we all know — that Margaret was persuaded into marrying me. It was not on her part an act of that instinctive love which, for the happiness of married life, wedlock should be. It was *my* fault, Ralph. Nobody's but mine. I was wrong; nay, I was criminal to persecute her with my addresses, when I saw that every concession accorded me was against the grain."

"Again, I exclaim, nonsense, nonsense! — At Bard-sel, Margaret grew really attached to you." —

"Ay, grew. But it was *à contre cœur*. And forced flowers have no fragrance — forced fruit, no flavour;

fair seeming, Ralph, and nothing else. Don't fancy, however, that I complain. She has been a good, kind, dutiful wife. I had no right to expect that the Dean's daughter, who, from the first moment of our meeting, betrayed a personal dislike, should ever love me as Elinor Royd, for instance, loves her husband — whom she chose in his rusty surplice, and adopted from that moment into her heart of hearts. No! Margaret likes me as well as she can; and what more have I a right to ask for? We have been perfectly happy together. I never cross her wishes, nor she, mine. If there exists a higher and more sacred order of conjugal affection, I had perhaps no right to aspire to it."

"Dick, you are talking like a fool!" said Ralph, looking intently at his glass, that his cousin might not discern the moisture gathering in his eyes.

"Perhaps so; but like an honest fool. My wife is not the less dear to me, because I have always seen that her strongest affections were centred in her children, rather than her husband. That it *is* in them they are centred fully satisfies me. I have implicit confidence in Margaret. Her nature is chaste, her spirit honourable, her principles excellent. She is come of a gentle race. The Dean, though inert and feeble, was intrinsically a gentleman; and, like old Faliero,

I trust unto the blood of Loredano
Warm in her veins."

Ralph Hargreave allowed a scarcely audible groan to escape him.

"But, above all," resumed Sir Richard, with expansion, "I am comforted by the certainty that though Margaret may feel a little ashamed at times of her sheepish uncouth husband, she has been far happier as his wife, than if she had married the finest of the fine gentlemen who may have dazzled her eyes for a moment; and who would, by this time, have flung her aside, an unconsidered, neglected wife."

"You sometimes call me a philosopher, Dick," said his cousin, after a pause, during which he finished his wine. "But you pass me by a long chalk. I am as incapable of such generous self-abnegation as yours, as of winning the battle of Waterloo."

"Yet I imbibed my philosophy, such as it is, from a spring where we used to drink together," replied Sir Richard. "As long as I can remember, the old folks at Bardsel, — Aunt Martha, and your excellent father, Ralph, — used to lay down as law, 'Do the duty that lies nearest to you; and extract all the happiness you can from the resources within your reach.' Instead, therefore, of fretting, after my irrevocable marriage, because I did not find myself adored, which I had no claim or pretension to be, I satisfied myself with possessing a charming wife, who regarded and respected me, and was, at least, incapable of adoring another man. Excellent philosophy, as you observe;

for it has afforded me a happy instead of a repining life."

"You're a good fellow, and that's the truth on't and the best on't," rejoined his cousin. "But to go and do likewise, people must be born with a temperament like yours. Preaching to one's self would never do it. I, for my own savage part, would as soon be united to a Parian statuette, as to a woman who would not laugh with me, cry with me, sell the shoes off her feet for me, and then walk barefoot to the diggins to earn more, for my sake. — Such a wife I've got; and here's her health, and long life to her." —

"Amen!" cried Sir Richard, unable to resist a smile at his kinsman's quaint enthusiasm. But in broaching a fresh bottle of claret, they naturally broached a fresh subject.

"This is good news of Willy Mordaunt's return," said Ralph. "I long to see him again. He will be good fun after his travels. The only fault one could ever find with him, was that he had lived in too narrow a circle. He will return liberalised. He will return a cosmopolitan."

"More of us than will ever care to own it, are likely to improve our minds and manners under the influence of the Exhibition agitation," rejoined Sir Richard. "Few events in my remembrance have more successfully promoted the fusion of classes. The Aristocracy has been forced into contact with the intelligent

and educated industrial classes; and both have benefited. Even you, Ralph — don't call me out for saying so, — are not half so rabid a radical as you were a couple of years ago."

"I never know what people mean by the word radical. I was a reformer then; I am a reformer now. It has not cooled my zeal to find collaborators in the good cause, as valuable as they were undreamed of, in the highest order of society — nay, in the *very* highest. While from golden calves, like our relative Sir Hurst, it is as hard to extract a guinea or an hour's work in behalf of his fellow creatures, as out of the master of a Union. In this Exhibition question, in the institution of Baths and Washhouses, in all endeavours for the melioration and comfort of the poor in which I have co-operated, it is from the great, and not from the middling, I have received the most gratuitous aid. It ought to be so. There is nothing marvellous in the fact. But till proof came, I was incredulous."

"On the other hand," rejoined Sir Richard, "you, Ralph Hargreave, the convert, have reciprocally converted others. What the Manchester school has effected in politics, *you* have done for ethics, by convincing dukes and duchesses that a man may be a cotton-spinner, yet write the Queen's English as well as Macaulay, and speak half the languages of Europe into the bargain; to say nothing of being a good-looking, pleasant fellow, who knows how to carve a frican-

deau and dress a wild-duck. Another glass of claret, Ralph; and may I live to see you a lord of the Treasury!"

But that a certain amount of excellent Chateau Margaux was circulating like nectar in his veins, Ralph would have been almost angry.

"No!" said he, "you both over-rate and under-rate me. I never exclaimed with Falstaff, as you insinuate, 'Stand aside, Nobility!' Neither have I ever aspired to the slow tortures of place. I can be a martyr on easier terms. I will not, however, protest too much, like the lady in Hamlet, — or yourself against coming into Parliament; lest like you, I should have to swallow more of my own words than are by any means easy of digestion. Conscious of my deficiency of administrative talent, I am certain of affecting a million's worth more good in my place in the House of Commons, than in the Cabinet; where I should be abhorrently tolerated by my colleagues, and perhaps end in becoming a temporizer and a sneak. Instead of which, after doing my duty in Parliament, I go down into Lancashire, and play the great man, — a Solon in the eyes of Hargreen, and a Cincinnatus in my own! —"

"Still, the award of 'God's men and columns' has its charm for even the sternest patriot."

"But I am *not* the sternest patriot! I am as soft at the core as a grenadilla. My work-people's happiness, Virginia's adoration, and my own self-esteem,

are more to me than the freedom of the City of London, in the finest of gold boxes; I hold with Göthe, that

Wer den Besten seiner Zeit genug gethan,
Der hat gelebt für alle Zeiten."

Coffee was now announced, and on rejoining Lady Hargreave in the drawing-room, the flow of their conversation was speedily checked by her grave face and evident absence of manner. How was she to call up spirits to converse with them? She was fresh from the perusal of a letter which had followed her from Morton Castle; — a letter which she had already judged it expedient to destroy; — a letter attempting to justify the writer's retaining possession of a certain sapphire ring, which he had forcibly taken from her hand!

Next day, as Ralph Hargreave was going over the improved wing of the house with his cousins, previous to proceeding on his journey, he seized a moment when he found himself alone with Margaret to use a friend's most dangerous privilege of plain-speaking.

"Dick is spending a mint of money here!" said he, "nearly as much as would build a town, or found a colony."

"Yes! I believe he has already found his expenses treble the estimates of Sir Simon Stucco," replied Lady Hargreave.

"But, why not remonstrate, Margaret?"

"Because Sir Richard's money is his own; and he is entitled to spend it in his own way."

"No man's money is his own. — It is a deposit for his children; and yours, my dear Margaret, will be poorer by hundreds of thousands for this ambitious folly."

"Why should we term a folly that which creates happiness for others? — Sir Richard has set his heart upon rendering Dursley a show place. Why prevent him? — Even as a vanity, it is surely a very harmless one."

"Don't talk like an irresponsible being. To squander one's life or one's fortune, Margaret, is more than a folly; — it is a crime. It grieves me to see you wasting yours; for I love you both with all my heart. Since your brother is absent, dear Margaret, let me speak to you as a brother."

For a moment, Lady Hargreave was touched by his earnestness. It brought back to her mind the Ralph of Bardsel, — of Hargreen.

"I know nothing, my dear Ralph," said she, "of my husband's income or plans, or engagements. Nor do I attempt to over-rule his tastes; for I own I should be angry if he interfered with mine."

"Just what I complain of; just what *he* complains of!" was Ralph Hargreave's injudicious rejoinder. "Do you suppose it is for this sort of apathetic mutual etiquette, that people swear at the altar to become one

flesh, one heart, one soul; for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse? Margaret — Margaret! consult your better self. — Be a wife; be a mother; be a Christian! — Remember the forcible lesson of Dante, that *this day will never dawn again*. — Let us be wise in time, or wisdom will come too late."

"I have done," was Margaret's chilling rejoinder. "Since Sir Richard complains of me to his friends, it is time that I should have recourse for counsel to my own."

CHAPTER XVII.

On crée des monstres ou des anges. Or, comme faiblesse et humanité sont termes synonymes, on ne s'intéresse guères à qui reste toujours fort. Il importe moins de savoir ce que l'homme peut ne *pas* commettre, que ce qu'ayant commis, il peut effacer.

CHARLES.

THE Hargreaves were not disposed that winter to prolong their Christmas holidays. Hospitality, in the state of their house, was out of the question. But the workmen had for a time departed; leaving the stucco to harden, and mortar and plaster to dry, ere the gilders and decorators commenced their costly operations; and Sir Richard profited by the interim to proceed to business, in town. Margaret was charmed by his determination. Though her interest in the progress of the Crystal Palace was not quite so enthusiastic as that of her husband, she was right glad to escape from her own society, to which, in the country, she was frequently reduced.

London was unusually sociable. Sir Richard hastened to assemble at his table, in Whitehall Gardens; the members of his committee and other friends who were exercising their energies in forwarding the grand project of the day. By that vast undertaking, the interest of his own improvements was thoroughly

eclipsed. Never had his time passed more pleasantly. Margaret seemed to take pride and pleasure in rendering their house agreeable, though she abstained from the meagre frigid assemblies of the *avant saison*; where people meet at eleven and disperse at twelve, having nothing to furnish matter for their chit chat which was not discussed the preceding night, and where even the *toilettes* exhibited, consist of the obsolete finery of a preceding season; unless when some injudicious coquette attempts to inaugurate a new Parisian fashion, and gets laughed at for her presumption by a society which, however much it may resemble the sheep of Panurge, is unanimous in anathematizing the unlucky mutton which first oversteps the hedge.

Instead of joining these cold and colourless assemblages, Lady Hargreave collected daily dinner-parties at home; and every one acquainted with London during the short days of the year, when so few houses are open for hospitality, can appreciate the charm of sociable chatty dinners, whose brilliant lights, lively conversation, and excellent cheer, seem doubly acceptable after the dull, foggy, muddy, chilly hours of a Laplandish February morning. It became a thing sought after, to dine with the Hargreaves. At White's, one of the favourite questions of the day was, "who is invited — who omitted;" and the *roués* began to make their court to Herbert Fanshawe, as the best means of securing an invitation. As an excuse to

each other for thus suddenly cultivating an acquaintance *extra muros* of the exclusive world, they discovered that "the house in Whitehall Gardens had gained immensely by the absence of that confounded prig, William Mordaunt."

Margaret herself appeared to be in unusual spirits. Her children, of whose beauty and intelligence she was as proud as though the impulsive fondness of mother-love were not in some degree deficient in her nature, were sitting to Mrs. Thornycroft for a group, originating in that pleasing artist's successful portraits of the royal children. A capital likeness had been attained; and it was admitted both by friends and by better judges, that little William Mordaunt, now in his tenth year, afforded a model for an infant Apollo, such as Phidias, or Flaxman, or Thorwaldsen might have prayed for. Herbert Fanshawe informed Lady Hargreave that Marochetti and Monti were wild to obtain the advantage of a study from her son.

With pardonable vanity, she was anxious that the group should appear in the annual exhibition, on a year when half Europe was likely to become spectators of the shows of our metropolis; and every day, the children were taken from their lessons, and carried off to the sculptress's atelier.

One morning, as she was getting into the carriage with them on their daily errand, to profit by the short daylight accorded in February by our murky atmo-

sphere, a railway cab, overburthened with baggage, drove at the same moment to the door; out of which jumped an ill-dressed and weary-looking man, who nevertheless insisted upon being embraced by his sister and her off-spring. Already, William Mordaunt had ordered his servant and baggage to proceed to his lodgings; intending to stay and talk with Lady Hargreave, from whom he had never before in his life undergone so long a separation; for, with the egotism of most travellers returning home after prolonged absence, he fancied his arrival as much a matter of importance to others as to himself; and that every thing must, for a moment, give way.

It went to his heart, therefore, when Margaret, instead of ordering away her carriage and returning to the house, informed him she had an engagement till three o'clock; at which hour, she hoped he would return.

"Why where on earth are you going with Mary and Willy so dressed out, at this hour of the day?" said he, in a tone of some vexation.

"They are sitting for their likenesses, and we are already late. Good bye, dear William. Between three and four, I shall expect you."

"Between three and four, she should expect him!" And this, after a separation of six months! William Mordaunt stood transfixed upon the pavement, staring wonderingly after the departing carriage, till a civil

butler advanced, and, far more cordially than his lady, begged to know whether Mr. Mordaunt would not please to step in, and breakfast after his journey, — or whether one of the servants should fetch another cab?

“No; he would walk to the nearest stand!” He would not, at that moment, be indebted to anything wearing the livery of the Hargreaves. And walk he did, doggedly, and with his hat over his eyes, towards Charing Cross; — regardless of his unbrushed clothes, and forgetting there was a public to be deprecated.

“Engaged to accompany her children!” — Why not despatch the governess, or tutor, in her place? — Or why not, at least, invite him into the carriage to accompany her? —

Alas! it was the daily custom of Herbert Fanshawe to inspect the progress of the modelling, with advice unasked for, and flatteries all but fulsome; and it would scarcely have done to expose his intimacy in the family to the discriminating eye of her brother. She was right. For the moment the idea crossed his mind that some evil influence must have interposed betwixt him and his sister, the shape instantaneously assumed by his chimera was that of Herbert Fanshawe.

On reaching his solitary lodging, which so sudden an arrival found unprepared, — disorderly, cheerless, smelling of soot, and garnished only by a file of

Christmas bills lying on his bureau, — the windows dirty, the fire vainly endeavouring to send its smoke up the damp chimney, — poor Mordaunt felt inclined to rush back to those warmer climes whose cheerfulness lies nearer the surface.

For Margaret, he found no forgiveness. While his servant, in unpacking his baggage, laid successively before him the hundreds of trifles which, in the course of his tour, he had collected for her and her children, all the delight he had promised himself in presenting them, was turned to gall. Above all, there were two rich cases, the result of a commission which, on his departure, he had received from Sir Richard (backed by a blank cheque upon his banker) to purchase at Naples for his sister and little Mary the most perfect specimens of pink coral that could be procured; and at Rome, a few of the finest cameos and intaglios, to be set by Froment Meurice in the lid of a work-box for Lady Hargreave's use. — William had taken such pleasure in the selection! — He had succeeded so perfectly! — But where was the pleasure of pampering the tastes of one so heartless as Margaret; — whom the world's vain breath of flattery was whirling away from their hearts. —

"Between three and four!" — No! He would *not* return to content himself with the wearied and divided attention she was likely to yield him. Wounded to the quick, he became nearly as hard-hearted as

his sister. He dressed himself — refreshed himself — then, rousing himself to forget his injuries, and renew those kindly sympathies which, after a long absence from town, came rushing through the veins of a London man like the current of the Thames through the arches of London Bridge, he hurried off to his Club; certain of meeting *there* the cherishing reception, withheld where he was better entitled to expect it.

His anticipations were fully justified. "Ha! Mor-daunt, old fellow! — Welcome, welcome back to England!" — burst from scores of voices. It was the high tide of the day. The room was crowded, and many circled round, to question and to comment. The curious had so much to ask; the gossips so much to tell. The politicians wanted to know whether it was true that France, like Sganall's wife, insisted on being cudged by her tyrant: and whether Austria, after grinning and showing her fangs, and being scourged for the insubordinate act, was crouching to the earth again, a still more spiritless hound than before? — Touching Naples, no one inquired: Altavilla supplying, by his correspondence with the *beau monde*, a choicer series of romances than ever issued from Italian invention since the days of Boccaccio.

The grander topics exhausted, what a cloud of small talk! He was blinded, as by the dust from a chaff-mill. Had he heard this — had he heard that. — Was he aware that several girders in the Crystal

Palace had given way — that thousands of panes of glass were broken daily by the wind — that flights of birds were in possession of the building — that nothing had yet arrived for exhibition from foreign countries — that bales upon bales were in the docks, for which no warehouses had been provided — that Russia had refused to contribute a single article — that Nicholas had given orders for a complete set of household furniture in malachite and gold, to be ready for the opening — that Ministers could not hold out till the 1st of May — that the Whigs were safe for the next three years; all the directly contradictory *on dits*, in short, which circulate in London Clubs, at that season of the year when candlelight assists in expediting the departure of the post.

For such things, William Mordaunt cared not. He wanted to talk of home. As a schoolboy, returning for the holidays, is more anxious about his pony's cough, or Chloe's last litter, than for the decisions of the recent Quarter Sessions or the result of some Bumbledom Election, he would have better liked to hear one word of the Hargreaves, than all the prospective glories of the Crystal Palace.

Yet, with a sort of nervous presentiment, he feared to lead to the subject. Forthcoming marriages were discussed, births, deaths, and inheritanceships, which had occurred during his absence. But his friends

seemed pointedly to avoid all allusion to the name he loved.

At length, he espied Barty Tomlinson in the distance, cogitating over the Globe; — chiefly because several other men were anxiously waiting for it.

“Now, then,” mused Mordaunt, “if any unpleasant news awaits me, I am sure to hear it.”

“Ha! Binks the Bagman, back again?” cried Barty, the moment he caught sight of him. “How are you, my dear fellow? But I need not ask. You have grown fat and flourishing upon your travels. And how do the Great Mogul, and the Cham of Tartary, and all the other potentates with whom you have been treating for samples of their dry goods and tobacco? — Does the descendant of Prester John still continue to ride on a white elephant, with cab action?” —

“*You*, I find, still continue to ride your high horse,” retorted William, provoked to see how many a smile rewarded this rhodomontade. “But what are you doing in town, Tomlinson, this open weather? — Why are you not at Melton?” —

“Hard up, my dear fellow. That twenty pounds I paid to the Crystal Palace subscription, by way of conscience-money, was my last farthing. I had serious thoughts, however, of applying to your brother-in-law, to mount me. Hargreave has sixteen hunters eating their heads off; being too much occupied here, at his

committee; — or on guard, Heaven knows where, — to recollect there is such a thing in the world as a hound or bullfinch.”

“And why had you recourse to second thoughts?”

“Because Dick Hargreave, the best fellow on earth, is apt to have screws in his stable; and because, when out of sorts, which one sees more than occasionally, he sometimes clothes his negatives in language such as would be excised by the Lord Chamberlain from an Adelphi farce.”

“I thought you were on better terms. I have seen you ride his horses at Dursley.”

“Ay; *that* was before

Some demon whisper'd Hargreave, have a taste.

Ever since the bricklayers took possession of Dick Hargreave's house, the megrims have possession of his head.”

William Mordaunt dared not proceed in his questioning. There were too many loungers around them, attentive to their colloquy.

“I met Lady Arthur O'Brennan, last night, at a flower-show in Piccadilly, that is, at one of Lady Fivepercent's carpet dances,” resumed Tomlinson, as eager to fasten upon a new comer as became his reptile nature; “and the fair Julia, (who by the way, is making up to poor old Lord Hardbake, who has neither heard nor seen for the last twenty years, and

to whom she is forced to pay her addresses through a pair of blue spectacles and an acoustic tube!) the fair Julia is frantic against Sir Richard and Lady Hargreave; either for not making her a daily fixture at their dinners, like the claret pitchers and ice pails; or, as *she* tells the story, for becoming touters to the Great Exhibition, and sending to Coventry all those who oppose it."

"And *does* Lady Arthur oppose it?"

"Ay! on the same grounds which fortify the Clitheroes in opposition. Wanting spirit to contribute liberally to its support, they fancy they redeem themselves by disguising their stinginess as a matter of principle. Sir Hurst evidently considers it a heroic act to start on tiptoes, and discharge his little popgun against the Rock of Gibraltar."

"Dick Hargreave must have been wasting his time not to have converted his sisters."

"His *sisters*, my dear fellow? He has enough on his hands, I fancy, in — that is — his improvement at Dursley, and all that sort of thing, you know," hesitated Tomlinson, as if checking what he was about to utter. "By the way, Mordaunt, you were all but knocking against Herbert Fanshawe on your way home. Now tell us! did you really observe so many arms and hearts and houses wide open to welcome that 'distinguished young diplomatist,' as the newspapers proclaim to be the case? Is poor old Sir Ro-

bert Branhholm to be paragraphed out of his appointment, to make way for the varnished boots which have made up their minds to stand in his shoes?" —

"I heard no hint of Sir Robert's removal. He gave me a capital dinner, I remember. On the spot, of course, his successor-presumptive's name was never mentioned."

"I thought so, when I read those outrageous puffs: like the overflowing audiences recorded in the play-bills of some theatre on the eve of bankruptcy!"

"Come, come! Fanshawe is *not* on the eve of bankruptcy!" cried Early Intelligence, insinuating his little wiggy head into the circle. "I never saw him so bumptious! There are bets flying about at the Coventry, that he marries Lady Emily Morton within a month." —

A roar of laughter saluted the announcement. But though the peculiar way in which Barty Tomlinson seemed to address his merriment on the subject to Mordaunt, purported to remind all present of the now notorious flirtation of Fanshawe with the Dean's daughter, poor William accepted the rumour as extenuating and satisfactory. With the slightest chance of such an event impending, Fanshawe's intimacy in Whitehall Gardens could only be of a friendly nature.

William Mordaunt's warm heart already relented towards his sister. He had judged her too severely.

He had no right to be testy with the dear Margaret to whom he was so fondly attached. At all events, the children had not offended him. He yearned towards those lovely, loving children. Before he had so much as skimmed an evening paper, his overcoat was hastily buttoned on again, and he was on his way back to Whitehall Gardens.

And this time, he was perfectly content with the warmth of his reception. Lady Hargreave embraced him with earnest tenderness; and the seeming slight of the morning was explained by the deference due to the golden value of an artist's time. At all events, while his sister, all kindness, beauty, and grace, addressed him in those endearing tones of other days which brought before him, in a moment, the Margaret of the Deanery — nay, the Margaret of Bassingdon, — it was impossible not to put his trust in her. Never had he seen her look more lovely. Never had he been so struck by the seemliness and elegance of her surroundings. After the mis-matched and gloomy magnificence of the Italian palaces, — after the white-washed barns which, in Germany, call themselves castles, — after the superficial polish of Paris, — a well-furnished London mansion, where everything is intended for use, where warmth and light appear spontaneous, and where the appliances and means of modern luxury are calculated alike to facilitate the labours of life and embellish its pleasures, — struck

him as scarcely less marvellous than if the creation of Aladdin's lamp.

It has been said by a shrewd observer that it is worth while to travel on the continent to see how amiable the English become when once out of their own country. But it is far better worth while to see them on their return: civilized, subdued, but appreciating, as for the first time, the homely happiness of an English fireside; and the open-handedness and open-heartedness of their own country-people.

In those pleasant, airy, bowery rooms in Whitehall Gardens, where, notwithstanding the contradictory testimony of a radiating grate, February, adorned with garlands of roses, carnations, and lilies of the valley, assumed the appearance of summer, Margaret appeared before his eyes as the Eve of the Eden of civilization.

Oppressed by a thousand pleasurable emotions, Mordaunt was not at leisure to discern that the improved beauty imparting such lustre to her face, arose from a certain intensity of expression, of sentiment, of sensibility, which had never before brightened its exquisitely feminine features. But even had he noticed it, how, alas! was he to surmise that the light streaming from her eyes, and the glow animating her cheek, had their origin while listening, amidst the shrubberies of Oak Hill, to the stirring stanzas of Locksly Hall, recited by the mellow voice of Herbert Fanshawe!

His happiness in his sister's company was not perfected till the children had been sent for, questioned, and caressed; preparatory to receiving from Uncle William those charming *cadeaux*, for which a servant had been hastily despatched. His own gifts to his sister were offered and accepted as if transferred from the left hand to the right; but he chose to leave to Dick Hargreave the pleasure of surprising his wife with the more precious tributes which had a claim to greater gratitude. When his brother-in-law at length made his appearance, to enjoy his unexpected arrival, though Mordaunt accosted him of course with the crude English formula of, "Hargreave, how are you?" he longed to throw his arms round him and embrace him, as a foreigner would fearlessly have done, to thank him for the peace and plenty in which his sister was installed; and still more for the perfect happiness pourtrayed in his own genial countenance. It was just so that William, who loved him as a brother — more than as a brother, as a *friend*, — could wish to see him.

"How unlucky, dear Margaret, that we have people to dinner to-day!" exclaimed the master of the house. "It would have been so pleasant to close round the fire, with the children to dessert, to question Uncle William about his travels!"

"You have a party then?" inquired Mordaunt.

"A dozen or so of country neighbours, who have

come up for the meeting of Parliament. The Delaviles, Fanshawe and his love Lady Emily Morton, with her mother. — A few others — I scarcely know whom."

"In that case, I had better dine at the Coventry."

"I would never forgive you if you did. Besides," he added, in a lower voice, "you have to bring me the Roman bracelet, and the coral, and cameos. We dine at eight. As you have to go home and dress, my dear fellow, you should be thinking of moving."

"What a world it is!" murmured Mordaunt, as he hurried home through a gathering fog. "Here is a couple as happy, perhaps, as ever Providence brought together — rich in all this world can offer, — attached, worthy, confident in each other, — and people can't let them alone, or believe in their happiness, but must raise scandals at their expense! — There have been moments when I myself have ventured to mistrust appearances. I am now at ease. How much, how much have I to be thankful for to God and him, for the happiness Dick Hargreave has secured to my father's daughter!" —

CHAPTER XVIII.

Oh! sweet pale Margaret,
Oh! rare pale Margaret,
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower!
Who lent you, love, your mortal dower
Of precious thought, and aspect pale,
Your melancholy sweet and frail?
From the evening-lighted wood,
From the westward-winding flood,
From all things outward you have won
A tearful grace; as though you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.

TENNYSON.

WILLIAM MORDAUNT was the lion of the dinner-party in Whitehall Gardens. In what is called the world, anybody who arrives from anywhere, with anything to relate, is welcomed as a godsend: not alone a Layard arriving from Nineveh, or a Brooke from Borneo, or, as we trust, a Franklin may yet arrive from the Artic regions; but the last idler from Paris, who can describe the cut of the Emperor's mustachios and epaulets; or the last sportsman from Newmarket, with mysterious whispers from Nat.

For a second, Mordaunt almost diverted from Ralph Hargreave the attention and cross-questioning of Lady Delavile. But when she saw how much his attention was distracted by gazing at his sister, and how little

he had to relate about Golden Fleeces, Archdukes, and Grand-duchesses, she resumed her courtship of the handsome radical, from whose honest nature her flatteries glided off "like dew-drops from a lion's mane," or raindrops from the plumage of some noble bird; while a gleam in his dark eyes betrayed a sense of the ludicrous expressing that he had never, in the course of his life, heard so much flagrant nonsense as from this mock oracle of the coteries.

When the ladies left the room, Fanshawe, who, throughout dinner, had appeared unconscious of the presence of any one but Lady Emily Morton, beside whom he was seated, glided into the vacant chair next William Mordaunt; and began to express with so much warmth his satisfaction at seeing him again, that Margaret's brother felt ashamed of his previous suspicions.

"Of course," said he, "you spent a day or two at — on your return? Do tell me, Mordaunt, honestly and as one of my very earliest friends, was my appointment canvassed there? — Do they shortly expect me?" —

"Honestly then, I never once heard mention of your name."

"Thank Heaven! Old Branhholm is one of my poor father's diplomatic contemporaries. They were attachés together, and remained friends to the last. And nothing would annoy me more than that Sir Robert should imagine I had been endeavouring to under-

mine him at the Foreign Office; as the officiousness of those confounded newspapers might lead him to suppose."

"Console yourself! the old fellow was thinking only of his *beccafichi*, and prosing over the numismatic collection which he intends to bequeath to the nation; to be decently interred, of course, among our archæological treasures in the catacombs of the British Museum."

"You have taken a serious weight off my mind," murmured Fanshawe, helping himself to candied ginger.

"In point of fact," resumed Mordaunt, "there is no thought or talk whatever of his quitting Italy."

Herbert Fanshawe smiled, with an air of superior information, implying:

"I, who have the key of the Foreign Office in my waistcoat pocket, could tell you, perhaps, more on the subject than is known out of Downing Street!" — He contented himself with replying aloud, — "I am not in the slightest hurry to replace him. I can wait. But I should be *really* sorry if a man of his time of life exposed himself to the mortification of a recall."

"*Monseigneur, j'attendrai!*" rejoined William, with shrewder sarcasm than might have been expected of him; and he and his companion now proceeded upstairs, to coffee, still engaged in conversation; entering the drawing-room just as Lady Delavile was admiring

on Margaret's handsome arm, the rich Roman bracelet, enriched with a fine antique, presented to her by her brother.

"You should have worn your coral comb, Margaret," said he, while her female friends crowded round her with compliments. "It is the prettiest specimen of modern jewellery I have ever seen."

Lady Hargreave, who saw in it only a present from her husband which she was little in the mood to be thankful for, found a ready pretext for refusal. But her brother heard her not. He was watching, at the further extremity of the room, his little nephew and niece: — Mary, so vain of her pink coral necklace; Willy, so delighted with its delicate colour peeping out between the dark curls of her waving hair, that he quite forgot to feel disappointed that his Reh-horn hunting whip was still detained at the Custom House. Their arms were entwined together. They were whispering to each other, regardless of any other human being in the room. And, involuntarily, the devoted affection of the boy brought back to William's mind his days of Bassingdon Parsonage. There was wanting only a lecture from Nurse Hatley to convert the little group into the Margaret and William of other days.

A few minutes afterwards, he moved into the inner room, to set down his coffee-cup on some table less loaded with books and engravings than the rest; where

sat Lord Delavile, engaged in conversation with another of the party, who, as William's entrance was masked by the tapestry *portières*, did not observe it.

Lady Fitzmorton and her daughter escorted by Fanshawe, who had just passed through the room on their way to the carriage, to proceed to a concert at the Dowager Lady Grey's, still furnished, apparently, a topic of conversation.

"I wonder Fitzmorton does not see through the thing, and call him to account," said Lord Delavile's companion (Sir Hurst Clitheroe's colleague in the representation of R—.) "'T is a scandalous business altogether. Fanshawe has no more thought of proposing to her than of proposing to *me*! The flirtation is a mere blind to his far more serious *liaison* with —"

He paused; for Lord Delavile, having caught sight of Mordaunt's embarrassing position and distressed countenance, made an imperative sign to him to be silent. But William had heard enough. His mind had previously misgiven him on the subject. This should not go on. Before four-and-twenty hours had elapsed, he would bring all parties to an explanation.

When he turned back to the drawing-room, the Delaviles' carriage was announced, — they, and nearly all the rest of the party, being about to attend the concert; and, as Ralph Hargreave had already stolen off to the Reform Club for the enjoyment of his cigar, Margaret requested her brother to take Lady Delavile

to her carriage. On his return, every one was gone; and his sister and her husband were standing together beside the fire, not, as he at first fancied, waiting to bid him good night, but discussing together a letter which Sir Richard held in his hand.

"All I can say is that if you *would* go, it would greatly please and oblige me," were the first words uttered by Dick Hargreave that met William Mordaunt's ear.

"You never mentioned the subject to me before."

"How could I? I did not receive the letter till this afternoon. It does not come off till next week; and there would be a sacrifice of only three days."

"With London as full as it is now, the sacrifice of three days is worthy consideration. The day your friend Elinor has fixed, is that on which Macready takes his leave of the stage; which I have always promised myself to attend."

"Pardon me! You are wrong by ten days in your calculation."

"William, too, of whom I have seen so little lately; — why must I leave him so soon?" —

"Where is it you want her to go?" — inquired Mordaunt, whom all this opposition rendered a little curious.

"To Lyndon. Elinor Royd's child (by the way perhaps, no one has told you that she has a fine boy) — Elinor's child, to whom, by long engagement I am

to be godfather, is about to be christened. Having scruples of conscience against proxies, she requires me to be present; and has invited my wife to accompany me, in so amiable, so grateful, so humble a tone, that I cannot bear she should be disappointed."

"But she won't be disappointed. Margaret *cannot* refuse so reasonable a request."

"Indeed she can," replied Lady Hargreave, quietly. "I have not the least intention of going. Lyndon is an immense way off. Mrs. Royd was never a particular friend of mine."

"You have, however, often told me," said her brother, "that on your visit to Dursley after my poor father's death, Elinor Maitland was the only person whose kindness consoled you. You told me how valuable were her counsels — how conciliating her manners! Never forget such an obligation as that, Margaret! — No — no! you cannot hesitate about accepting her invitation."

"I do not hesitate. I most positively decline it," replied Lady Hargreave, in stern displeasure; for she fancied that her brother was reviving these Dursley reminiscences solely to humiliate and annoy her.

"You *refuse* to accompany Dick on this friendly visit —"

"Don't torment her!" interrupted Dick, evidently because he foresaw the ungracious answer he was about to provoke. "If Margaret don't like to go, why

should she? — A long journey at this time of year, is certainly somewhat of a bore." —

"It will be a far greater bore to you to be alone."

"Not if it would annoy my wife to be my companion. Besides, I need not be alone. The children are especially invited by one who regards them almost as her own; and though I should be sorry to take Mary so far at this season of the year, Willy would be the better for it. The boy must learn to rough it; or we shan't have him ready for Eton next spring."

"There can be no reason why Willy should not accept Mrs. Royd's invitation," said Lady Hargreave, in a relenting tone.

"None whatever. He has scarcely enjoyed a day's holiday this winter. And the journey would amuse and instruct him."

"Speak to his tutor, then, to-morrow. Not to the boy himself, if you please. The prospect of a week's pleasure would thoroughly interrupt his studies in the interim."

"And you *really* do not mean to accompany your husband?" inquired William, who was waiting, hat in hand, the close of the discussion, to wish them good night.

"I really do *not*. You seem to think it a crime if, on any point, I venture to consult my own taste and convenience."

"Good night, Margaret," was all her brother could

utter. After shaking hands, in silence with Sir Richard Hargreave, he was out of the room.

"Is this my sister? — Is this my dear gentle Margaret?" — was his first thought, as he prepared for a hurried walk homewards. His next was of a severer nature. "And who has done this? Who has changed her thus? Who has rendered her cold, ungrateful, worldly? It seems but yesterday since, on occasion of his first visit to the Deanery with Hargreave, my heart foreboded evil to arise from her acquaintance with that man — with that *rascal!*" — he continued, clenching his hand, as he walked along. A sudden thought struck him that, instead of going directly at home, he would hasten off and interrogate Ralph Hargreave concerning all he had been hearing. Ralph might afford some explanation to pacify his feelings, and prevent his passing a sleepless night.

He hurried accordingly to Maurigy's Hotel, where Hargreave had permanent chambers. As a matter of course, he was, at that hour, refused admittance by the hall porter. "Mr. Hargreave *was* come home; but he had retired to his bed-room, and was probably undressed."

On the plea of business, however, Mordaunt persisted; and having summoned the head-waiter, by whom he could be recognised as an intimate friend and connection of Mr. Hargreave's, a yawning individual made his appearance stretching his arms, out of the coffee-

room, where he had been dozing in defiance of the glare of gas. On seeing Mordaunt, the inert mass was instantaneously galvanised into the spruce, active, and obliging waiter.

"See Mr. Hargreave, Sir? — Of course, Sir. — Will you allow me to show you the way up stairs, Sir? — The old room, Mr. Mordaunt — thirty-four, to the left of the stairs!"

Taking two steps at a time, he was at the door, and in the room, without waiting for an announcement. Ralph was already in the act of undressing.

"What, in Heaven's name, is the matter?" cried he, really believing, for a moment, that Mordaunt had taken too much wine — so heated and breathless did he appear.

"Nothing's the matter. Only I want you to answer me a few questions."

"As many as you choose; if you will first please to get off the sleeve of my dressing-gown, which I have just thrown off, and let me put it on again, and accompany you into the other room, where the lights are still burning."

William Mordaunt cared nothing, just then, for light or dark. Excited as he was, he went on talking all the time Ralph was throwing on his wrapper. Almost before he was certain that the waiter, who had been stirring up the fire in the sitting-room, had de-

parted, and closed the door, he burst *in medias res* into the subject of his visit.

"Hargreave — I am perfectly wretched!" cried he, "and you, and you only can help me."

"I'm heartily ready to do so, my dear Mordaunt. But what ails you?"

"I am all but distracted at the change I find in my sister."

Ralph's countenance fell. He had supposed himself about to be entrusted with some affair of honour. He was *not* prepared to talk about his cousin's wife.

"I have been half a year away," persisted Mordaunt, "and God knows what has occurred between her and her husband during my absence. Her manner to him is cold, almost insulting. Answer me, Ralph, answer me like a good and upright man as you are. Answer me in all sincerity before God. — *Has Margaret been disgracing herself?*"

"No!" cried Ralph Hargreave, firmly and energetically. "What do you take me for? Should I have been sitting in a friendly way by her side, if I thought she had betrayed the friend I love and honour?"

Tears were already bursting from the eyes of Mordaunt. That one harsh monosyllable had made him the happiest of men.

"Forgive my violence," he faltered, "you can scarcely guess what I have been suffering; you can scarcely understand how dear she is to me. You love your

wife, Ralph. But what is such an affection compared to that of two orphans, who have struggled through life together, — mutually reliant, mutually attached. Margaret is to *me* as a cherished child — an only child!" —

"I know it, my dear fellow, I know it, William, I know it. And therefore am rejoiced at your return to England. For though all is not *lost*, as you seem to fancy, all is not *well*. Margaret wants talking to. *I* made the attempt. But from *me* the advice appeared officious and impertinent, which you are intitled to offer. Dick, as I need not tell you, has always spoiled her. Dick is blinded by affection. But our Margaret has fallen into bad hands, Mordaunt. And though, at present, all they have taught her is waywardness and levity, Fanshawe's influence is not to be trusted."

"Trusted? There lives not a man more unprincipled!" —

"The best thing that could happen would be for him to get his mission, and be off to Italy. Out of sight — out of mind. They would soon forget each other." Involuntarily William Mordaunt shuddered at hearing them thus definitively coupled together! "I have sometimes thought," continued Ralph, "that it would not be a bad dodge to give him a helping hand with government. We might perhaps do more than the Duke of Merioneth, with all his strawberry leaves.

And as far as I am concerned, I shan't be easy till he is on t' other side the Channel."

"What a degrading alternative for Dick Hargreave's wife!" cried William, as he hurriedly paced the room.

"It might have been worse. But if we exert ourselves, all may still be well. You must have a serious explanation with her."

"Not I! — *my* explanation shall be with *him*!"

"You can't be such a blockhead, Mordaunt! To draw the attention of all London to circumstances of which more than half London is ignorant! Besides, what right have you to interfere? Margaret may be Dean Mordaunt's daughter, but she is Dick Hargreave's wife; and if *he* choose to sanction her intimacy with this fellow, which, trust me, he would not do unless as sure of her as of his salvation, what business have you to step in and create dissension? Fanshawe would tell you, with a sweet smile, that he frequented Whitehall Gardens at Sir Richard Hargreave's express invitation. You would find yourself completely in the wrong!" —

"*Damn him!*" —

"With all my heart. But *our* business is with Margaret. As I said before, advise her kindly and mildly. Appeal to her feelings. Plead the interests of her children. Plead as real affection always knows how to plead; and, my life upon it, you will soften *her* heart as Hamlet that of his mother."

"You are right, perhaps. I am afraid you are right," groaned Mordaunt. "To-morrow, then, I will request a private interview with her. I dread it, Ralph. But the attempt must be made. Good-night, old fellow. We both want rest. I don't apologise for having disturbed you. You are nearly as much attached as I am to Dick, and to my sister."

Next day, however, William Mordaunt found that his purpose was not immediately accomplishable. His official duties detained him the whole morning. On Lady Hargreave's side, Mrs. Thornycroft was to be attended to. It was not for three days he could manage to obtain an audience; for which, in the interim, his anxiety increased a hundred-fold. A passing skirmish with Barty Tomlinson at his club — a passing wrangle with Lady Arthur, who called him to her carriage in the drive in Hyde Park, as he was on his road to take his first survey of the Crystal Palace, to which his private cares prevented him from rendering the homage so much its due, — convinced him that his sister's fatal folly had created one of the current scandals of the day. Twice, when people began alluding in his presence to the newspaper announcement of the diplomatic preferment of Fanshawe, and discussing what influence it would have upon his "love affairs," a sudden perception that *he* was listening, produced an accusatory silence.

But while congratulating himself that his arrival in

England would bring all these miseries to an end, he little surmised that, so far from regretting his return, no one was more sincere in welcoming him to England than Herbert Fanshawe; — no one more anxious to see him exercise a restraining power over his sister. For Herbert had placed himself in the position of the rash necromancer of old, who evoked a spirit which his skill was not potent enough to control; and he was horror-struck at perceiving that *his* Lady of Locksley Hall, instead of purposing to add his homage to the luxuries of Dursley, Oak Hill, and Whitehall Gardens, was deeply impressed by the principle that a woman who has withdrawn her affections from her husband, is no longer entitled to profit by his protection, or enjoy the worldly goods with which he has endowed her. Lady Hargreave was capable, he verily believed, of quitting her husband's roof, and consummating his own ruin, by seeking refuge under *his*; — and from the moment this alarming prospect presented itself, he had relaxed in this insidious devotion. It was by no means with such intentions he had endeavoured to insinuate himself into her heart, and blight her domestic happiness.

No one better understood than Herbert Fanshawe that we live under the sceptre of Queen Victoria — a matron and a mother — not under that of George IV. — the profligate king, and king of profligates. It had not needed the early lessons of Sir Claude to impress upon

his mind that — failing landed and funded property, railway shares, or debenture — character constitutes a valuable investment for a public man. For some time past, he had been administering to the infirm condition of his own, as tenderly as Dean Mordaunt, to the delicacy of his digestion, or the shapeliness of his nails. The Duke of Merioneth had apprised his aspiring kinsman that, if he intended to achieve preferment, he must go through those forms of confession and absolution, which, in the times of Charles X., were exacted of the man who applied for a passport for a journey.

It was providential, therefore, since circumspection was the order of the day — that Margaret's brother had made his appearance to tame down the romantic mood into which she was soaring; which he, as well as Sir Richard, did not scruple to attribute to incipient and hereditary flightiness of nature, such as had broken out so disastrously in the unfortunate Lady Milicent. Under sanction of Mordaunt's presence, Fanshawe trusted he should retain his honorary post in Whitehall Gardens; which he had been almost alarmed into resigning.

Meanwhile, Margaret, conscience-stung and unhappy, but still a prey to the infatuation created by vanity and stimulated by luxurious idleness, was endeavouring to silence the remorseful promptings of her soul in the turmoil of fashionable life. Over her con-

duct, religion had ceased to exercise a regulating influence. She continued to observe its outward forms. Early habit so far prevailed that exterior usages were respected. But she never enjoyed a really pious nature. — She was not one of those who, grateful for mighty benefits, rush to their chamber, and, on their knees, pour forth their gratitude to God; or who, in an extremity of sorrow, instructively exclaim — “Lord, save us! — We perish!” — Even such piety as she possessed — such piety as forms the natural dowry of the young, — had been repressed by her residence in a cathedral town; where the jargon and forms, and mechanical adjuncts of divine worship, are so wantonly converted into vulgar topics of discussion, that veneration is stifled at the fountain-head.

The sure and safe guardian of her soul was consequently absent from his post; and when once, in the day of her temptation, she had hardened that heart which she had lately ceased to examine, and long ceased to discipline, what chance, — what chance! —

The moment her brother made his appearance in London, Margaret resolved to oppose and resent whatever interference he might attempt. Especially qualified by nature to become in married life, what Hawthorne terms “a gentle parasite, the soft reflection of a more powerful existence,” the fatality which had united her to one of whom, not being the man of her choice, she presumed to fancy herself the superior, had hollowed

her heart into a vacuum where even its natural affections were doomed to droop and perish.

Even the children, once her darlings, had occasion to notice the change in their mother's temper. Her beautiful boy — her pride — had more than once stood gazing with wonder at the frowns which occasionally contracted her countenance; till his own large blue eyes, mild and heavenly as we fancy those of a seraph, became filled with tears, as from a vague presentiment that evil was impending.

Once, indeed — one morning when little Willy interrupted her while reading the newspaper, she reproved him, for the first time in his little life, so harshly, that the boy fell into a passionate fit of weeping. But even before his sobs reached her ear, Margaret had caught him to her heart, — had covered him with caresses. — Ere they were reconciled, she all but asked pardon for her impatience!

It was just at that moment, while Willy was seated on her knee with his arm flung round her neck, and Mary, kneeling by her side, holding the hand of her brother, that their uncle made his appearance to claim the fulfilment of his sister's promise to grant him half an hour's private conversation. The visit was untimely. It went to her heart at that moment, to send the children away.

Already, he felt half inclined to withdraw his request. She would not have thus occupied her soli-

tude, had Fanshawe obtained over her mind the evil influence he dreaded. But no sooner were the children out of sight, than Lady Hargreave's manner resumed its defiant hardness.

"What have you got to say to me William?" said she, as if hastening to meet the worst. "Are you going to follow the example of Emma Clitheroe and her sister; and preach to me, that, because I am beginning to find pleasure in society, La Trappe is a safer sojourn than what is called the world?"

"I am not going to preach to you. I am not going even to reason with you," he replied, astonished into abruptness by the fearlessness with which she challenged reproof. "I only want to tell you, Margaret, that if I am to hear your name coupled with those of your sex who have dishonoured it, you will fairly break my heart. My life, since I returned to England, sister, has been one prolonged agony! You do not know — women *never* know — how remorselessly their conduct is discussed at clubs — at messes — at the covert-side — wherever men alone are gathered together. Rumours have reached me —"

"Don't talk to me of rumours! I have done no wrong, and defy all blame."

"Look me in the face, then, Margaret, and repeat the words, and I am satisfied."

She looked him in the face. But, on meeting his eye, did *not* repeat the words — they seemed to die

upon her lips. "Never," said she, "never, since I married, were my husband and myself on happier terms. What right, then, have his family — the world — yourself — to find fault with my conduct? — Sir Richard Hargreave is satisfied. — Do not attempt to stir up strife between us."

"God forbid! — God, in his mercy, forbid! But is there no one else in this world, Margaret, to whom you are responsible? Is there no brother who has watched over you from girlhood, and would have sacrificed his own heart's blood to do you service, — no brother who has loved and adored you? For your sake, I have stifled the natural instincts of my age — I have taught myself to look on love and marriage as perils to be avoided — that you might have no rival in my heart — that I might be ever near you — ever, ever near you, — to guard you from evil, Margaret, — to remove the thorns of life from your path." —

"You have been a most kind brother. Do I deny it? But be kinder still: and do not treat her as a child, one who, as a woman, may resent your lessons."

"If I treat you as a child, 'tis because you have been to me as a child; — because you *are* my child — you, *once* so good, so true, so chaste!"

Margaret started, as it wounded to the quick. "And who dares insinuate that I am no longer so?" cried she, with indignation.

"Hundreds!" —

"Hundreds, then, who bear false witness!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes. "No one is safe from calumny, dear brother. But I swear to you, by all that is holiest on earth — by my father's memory — by my hopes of salvation — if I were unworthy to bear my husband's name — if I had sinned as you say the world accuses me — I should not be at this moment in this house."

"I believe you! Your assertions are needless. If I thought otherwise, Margaret, I would not answer for not — no matter! — But it is against this pride and self-confidence, my darling sister, that I would now warn you. It is against the plotting of a fellow without feeling, without principle, without a soul. Fanshawe is incapable of one kind or generous sentiment. If, at this moment, he could advance his interests in life by trampling on your heart, he would witness your shame without a pang."

"If you persist in this ungenerous tone, I will not listen to another syllable," cried Margaret, rising as if to leave the room. "You are most unjust, William, most cruel!"

"I am your brother; entitled to scarify a wound which may yet carry you to the grave. There is not a reptile, Margaret, there is not a rabid animal on earth, whose slaver is more dangerous than the assiduities of Fanshawe. No! you shall not go! By force will I detain you to hear what your own levity has

rendered urgent. Oh! sister, sister! My own little Margaret of Bassingdon, — listen to me. Do not throw away your happiness — the happiness of the best husband that ever breathed, — the happiness of the fair children whom God has given you — the happiness of the poor brother who would die to serve you — to gratify a vain, flimsy egotist, of whose pleasures you are but one of a thousand idle toys. Our name is yet honest, darling Margaret. My father's memory is undisgraced. — Your husband is unexasperated. — Be wise, be merciful, be yourself! — Dismiss this man from your heart. — It can be done without exciting notice; he is about to leave the country. — Be the intimacy dropped at once — at once, and for ever!"

"Why should I be so ungenerous? Why should I so gratuitously wound the feelings of a friend? *He* would not renounce *my* regard in deference to the idle gossip of society."

"Would he *not*!" —

"Again I say, you are unfair."

"And do you mean then to place in the scale against your husband, children, brother, this mere acquaintance, — this lover who, when he might have honourably offered you his hand, demurred from prudential motives?" —

"Demurred from disinterested consideration for my welfare."

"Infatuated! — ungrateful!" — exclaimed William Mordaunt, wildly tossing his arms.

"Ay — *ungrateful!* That is the word! For years past, brother, have you been wounding my feelings by presenting my husband to me in the light of a benefactor. I was always to be '*grateful*' — a word that grates against the very soul of a woman and a wife. A wife must *love*, a woman must *love*. And you, William, you who stifled my young affection by exacting this constant tax — this debasing tax — are answerable for any attachment, which in my humiliation I may have framed elsewhere."

"Don't say that word again, Margaret!" cried he, almost frantic. "*Don't* — I cannot answer for myself if I hear my father's daughter indulge in so shameless an avowal."

"I do not fear you," replied Lady Hargreave, less moved by his violence than by his previous remonstrances. "You would scarcely strike me, — you would scarcely *stab* me, — because I find the society of one of your friends pleasanter than that of a man who cares more for his architect's estimates, and the state of Vancouver's Island, than for —"

She paused. Tears, extorted by remorse at the menaces into which he had been goaded, were stealing down William Mordaunt's manly face. A pang struck to the heart of Lady Hargreave. Never but once be-

fore, had she seen her brother weep. It was as they stood together by the death-bed of their father.

Heart-struck and ashamed, she was about to throw herself into his arms, and sue for pardon; — no longer the haughty, indignant Lady Hargreave — but reconverted into the fond sister — the Dean's daughter; — when, unluckily, a step approached the door; and the good-humoured voice of her husband, humming a popular air, was heard without — familiar, commonplace — recalling all the disgusts fostered by the fastidiousness of her arch-enemy.

Mordaunt had scarcely time to dash the tears from his eyes, ere his brother-in-law was with them. Sir Richard Hargreave took no note of their discomposure. He was fresh from his committee, — full of news, overflowing with spirits. His errand was simply to make arrangements with his wife concerning little Willy's journey with him to Lyndon.

CHAPTER XIX.

But yet she liv'd, and all too soon,
Recover'd from that death-like swoon —
But dead to reason — every sense
Had been o'erstung by pangs intense.
She feared — she felt — that something ill
Lay on her soul, so deep and chill —
That there was sin and shame she knew,
That some one was to die — but *who?*
She had forgotten; — did she breathe;
Could this be still the earth beneath,
The sky above — and men around?

BYRON.

WHEN the morning arrived for the departure of Sir Richard and her boy, Margaret began to fancy they would never be off. Little Willy had a slight cold; which his father seemed to think a sufficient reason for postponing the journey. "A day later, and they might still be in time for the christening." But Lady Hargreave, contrary to her usual carefulness on her children's account, would not hear of delay. "Well wrapt up, the boy could not possibly increase his cold. Mrs. Royd was expecting them. In a small household like her's, it was inconvenient to be kept in suspense."

The truth, alas! was, that for four days past, not a syllable of or from Herbert Fanshawe had reached her ears; and she was eager to free herself from ob-

servation, in order to ascertain the cause of this mysterious silence.

When the carriage came to the door to convey them to the Euston Square Station, Margaret had hardly patience with her husband's vacillation. He, who had been hitherto all impatience for the journey, now seemed to regard it with repugnance. He led the child to his mother to be taken leave of; and while she appeared to be absorbed in noticing the richly-furred dress presented to him by his father for the journey, Sir Richard hastily embraced her. But Lady Hargreave's farewell kiss to little Willy appeared so cold to the child, that, when he had reached the door, he burst from Sir Richard's hold; and, rushing back to his mother, seized and covered with caresses the hand that hung down upon her velvet dress.

"God bless you, my dear boy! Be good — be obedient, — and come back to me safe!" said Margaret, touched by his dutiful affection.

When they drove from the door, she returned hastily into her dressing-room, and prepared to write to Herbert Fanshawe: — straight from the best affections of the human heart to its worst treachery! — But when once a woman loses sight of Duty — the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, vouchsafed to guide us through the wilderness — there is no guessing into what shadow of darkness her steps may

wander. From bad to worse, the progress is scarcely perceptible.

When her letter of inquiry was written and despatched, Margaret occupied herself in wandering like an unquiet spirit through her spacious apartments, awaiting her messenger's return. One moment, she gazed from her window on the animated panorama below, where the boats darted along like swallows on the wing, while her leaden Mercury still tarried by the way; then, in unreasonable impatience, turned from one gorgeous time-piece to another in her lofty saloon, hoping to find her watch at fault. But, alas! the minutes kept true time; though her own immortal soul had escaped its regulator.

At last — at last — the butler made his appearance, salver in hand, bearing a note. Lady Hargreave hastened to seize it. No answer. — Her own letter returned! —

"Mr. Fanshawe has been out of town these two days, my Lady. Mr. Fanshawe is gone down to Morton Castle. The footman brought back the letter, and waits your Ladyship's further orders about it."

"I will send it by the post," said Lady Hargreave, taking it calmly from the waiter.

But scarcely had the butler left the room, when she gave way to the irritation produced by this vexatious surprise.

"Gone to Morton Castle!" —

She might have added with the frantic Constance:

Gone to be married! Gone to swear a peace!

for, within half an hour of her first intimation of coming events, the following characteristic epistle was placed in her hand.

"Mr. Fanshawe's servant has just brought *this*, my Lady," said the butler, re-appearing with what he supposed would be a peculiarly acceptable letter — as explanatory of the movement which had appeared to surprise his mistress. "I think it must have been over-looked, my Lady, as Mr. Fanshawe has been out of town these two days. Probably, your Ladyship's letter reminded the person who had neglected his orders to deliver it."

Lady Hargreave thought her over-considerate domestic would never leave the room; for he seized the opportunity to make up the fire with elaborate neatness; and draw down with much precaution the holland-blinds of the bow-window, through which a glaring spring sun was shining into the grate. At length, she was alone; and able to break the well-known seal, emblazoned with a too well-known tortuous serpent-like entanglement of H's and F's. The letter, dated from Morton Castle (but evidently written in London), ran as follows:

"I have to claim your congratulations, — nay,

your double congratulations, my dearest friend; for my appointment will be gazetted on Saturday, and my marriage is at length settled. For some time past, you must have foreseen this: for the one event is, in fact, consequent on the other. The Duke of Merioneth having received an intimation from high authority, last autumn, that, as it was indispensable for the Legation at — to be established on a footing enabling the British Minister to do its honours with liberal hospitality and rigid domestic decorum, I saw at once that my only chance of advancement lay in a suitable marriage, a marriage such as awaits me with Emily Morton; whose weakness in my favour, dearest Lady Hargreave, we have sometimes laughed at; but who, you will admit, is the very wife for a poor envoy like myself.

“A man loves but once in his life. Happy he who loves where he can offer his hand. But next to this rarest of human blisses, is a well-assorted match; and from such, I hope to derive my future tranquil happiness. That I have your best wishes I am certain; and your long-standing friendship for Emily will, I earnestly trust, determine you to treat with clemency and kindness

Your most devoted and grateful

Humble servant,

H. F —.”

Well that the butler had drawn down the blinds to exclude the sunshine! — Margaret could scarcely have borne that it should glare in upon her miserable condition; as, for more than an hour, she sat transfixed in the corner of the sofa where she had perused this heartless and artful epistle. And was this the end of all? — Ay, the *very* end! She had been duped, — deceived, — rendered the blind to Fanshawe's courtship; which if openly attempted, Lady Fitzmorton who disliked him, would have instantly checked. For months past, had she filled this honourable post, in blind besotted infatuation; risking her soul's salvation, — her husband's honour, — her children's future weal, for the shallow vain delight of fancying herself adored by a coxcomb!

And now, what was to become of her? How could she presume to turn anew for happiness, to the desecrated hearth of domestic life? — Though less guilty than the world supposed her, — was she not *too* guilty to hope for peace on earth, or pardon from above? —

By good fortune, Lady Hargreave had previously issued orders that no visitors should be admitted. No one therefore interfered or molested her.

For hours did she remain there; entranced in her reflections, — growing gradually colder and colder. — She was roused at last by the exulting step and voice of her brother William, approaching the room.

"How are you, darling sister? — All alone? — At what o'clock this morning did they start?" — cried he, as he drew near, questioning, but without waiting a reply. "I am come to sue for pardon, Meg; on my knees if you wish it, — for I am much too happy to be proud! But how could you be so cruel, when you saw me all but distracted t'other day, as to withhold the half dozen words which would have relieved my uneasiness? Why leave me to learn from the gossip of the clubs that Fanshawe was an engaged man, on the eve of marriage; and that my accusations were as foolish as they were false?"

Lady Hargreave gazed at him in vacant stupefaction.

"Everybody is charmed with the match," continued William, imputing her silence to prolonged displeasure against himself. "Lady Emily is a universal favourite; and people are so glad that her exemplary constancy should be rewarded by this capital appointment — in *my* opinion, pleasanter than any of the great embassies."

"The appointment, then, is as certain as the marriage?" inquired Margaret, in a hoarse voice.

"As if you did not know! But I must say, you kept their counsel better than ever friend did before; which, I verily believe, greatly contributed to the happy conclusion of the business. You need not, however, have kept *me* in the dark. You might have

trusted me. And it would have saved me such worlds of anxiety."

Lady Hargreave made several attempts to interrupt him. But the words died in her throat.

"Come hither, William," said she, faintly, when he had done, pointing to a place beside her on the sofa. "I am not well. — I have scarcely breath to explain. — But, at least, I will not add the sin of hypocrisy to my other faults. I must not mislead so good, so kind, a brother. It would be easy to leave you in the error that you cling to. But I can't, dear William. — I *must* tell you the whole, *whole* truth. — No one has been so startled by this marriage as myself. Herbert Fanshawe deceived me — deceived me, as you said he would."

William Mordaunt threw himself into the seat she pointed out to him. All the blood in his body seemed throbbing in his temples. He had scarcely courage to listen further.

"Do not mistake me," said Margaret, enlightened by his agitation. "Do not suppose that my declarations of the other evening were disingenuous. I confessed to you then, as I do now, the utmost of my crime — to have listened to this glozing tempter, and not driven him from my door. But I have done no worse. If I have no longer a right to the confidence of my husband, I have not forfeited my claim to my children's love and duty."

The hand of her brother instantly sought her own. He was comparatively relieved. Had Herbert Fanshawe at that moment entered the room, he would not have sprung upon his throat and throttled him, as might have been the case some moments before.

"Here is his letter," continued the broken-spirited woman. "Read it, and absolve me if you can. I do not accuse *him*. It is myself, whose weakness, whose wickedness, is at this moment stirring the tempest in my mind."

William Mordaunt hastily perused the letter. His first impulse was to crumple the paper and throw it into the fire. Second thoughts were wiser. Having resmoothed and refolded it, he gave it back to his sister. It was a document that *ought* to remain in her possession. But having done so, he took her hand kindly, and held it soothingly in his own.

"I have no wish," she added, the frozen current of her blood beginning to flow more freely at this simple demonstration of sympathy, "to say one word in extenuation of my folly. The word you used the other night, and which I resented,—I resented I fear because it was the true one to apply to my conduct — 'Ungrateful.' Yes! never was woman *more* ungrateful than I to my husband! Never was man more devoted, more indulgent, more true, more generous, than he to *me* — than he to *mine*. And yet I allowed a mere specious well-spoken man of fashion, to make

him an object of mockery in my presence. — Ungrateful! — *Ungrateful!*”

Her brother, however he might pity her anguish, could not gainsay her words.

“And now,” said Lady Hargreave, as if endeavouring to throw off the threefold weight that oppressed her, “tell me, William, what is to be my future punishment? — What is my present duty? — Be your injunction what it may, I will abide by it. — You are a man of unswerving principle. — If Richard is my husband, he is your *friend*. You would not have him injured or deceived. — Answer me! — Does it behove me to tell him all? — To humble myself before him and throw myself on his mercy?” —

Mordaunt's first impulse was in favour of unreserved frankness. But he paused ere he replied. It was his business to consider the happiness of Hargreave. Would not the remainder of his life be irremediably embittered by discovering how little dependence could be placed on the principles of her who bore his name, and to whom the guidance of his children was entrusted? —

“Had your fault been greater,” was his long-considered answer, “I should have held it your duty to withdraw from this house at once and for ever. As it is, I must more explicitly understand the extent of your repentance — of your intentions — your feelings!” —

"My feelings are those of the bitterest shame. My intentions, if I may be permitted to fulfil them, are to merit the renewal of my husband's love and confidence by unlimited devotion to his wishes, by the grateful devotion in which you justly accused me of being deficient. My task shall be diligently done. — I will serve seven other years for his affection, as Jacob for Leah."

"You promise well, my poor sister," replied Mor-daunt, almost alarmed by the strenuous firmness which impelled her words from between her close-set teeth, though a tremulous movement in her now crimson eyelids showed that the spirit within was fluttering. "God prosper your endeavours."

"If I fail, rebuke me!" said she. "If I fail, restrain me. If I fail, remind me of the agony and humiliation of this day. Be ever near me, dearest William. You have been my stay through good and evil; never again desert my side," — sobbed Margaret, whose tears burst forth from their frozen source, the moment her brother, sustaining her on his shoulder, imprinted on her forehead a kiss of pardon and peace.

"You admit that you owe to Dick Hargreave," whispered he, after endeavouring to calm her emotion, "as much as was ever owed by wife to husband. See that it be equitably paid; I ask no more. See that the life of your children's father is made happy; and let us both forget the past."

William suddenly started up, to screen Lady Hargreave's distracted appearance and dishevelled hair from the observation of the butler; who at that moment entered the room, holding something in his hand. Had Mordaunt been suffering less keenly from mental agitation, he must have noticed the scared and breathless appearance of the man. But he was thinking only of his sister; and advanced towards the intruder, as if to receive his message.

Instead of being surprised at his interference, the servant hastily beckoned him from the room. No sooner had they reached the lobby, than, trembling and incoherent, he placed the paper he was holding in the hands of his master's brother-in-law.

"The clerk who brought it is waiting below, Sir," faltered he. "Oh! Mr. Mordaunt! — My poor, poor master! —"

It contained a telegraphic message. It announced a terrible collision, by which several carriages of the train in which Sir Richard Hargreave had quitted London that morning, were destroyed, and many passengers fatally injured!

William had scarcely courage to read to the end. But the technical brevity of such despatches soon brought the whole truth under his eyes. "Sir Richard Hargreave and son seriously injured; fracture and contusions. Bring down as soon as possible the best surgical advice."

The message was dated from a station about four hours' distance from town. The clerk in attendance was bidden to state that, in half an hour, an express train would start from the Euston Station, to convey down the line the friends and medical attendants of the sufferers.

Not a second must be lost. Too much deference to the feelings of his sister might be the cause of sacrificing, by delay, the valuable life that was in peril. With as much precaution as there was time to use, therefore, he communicated to Margaret the dreadful intelligence; entrusted her, half-fainting, to the care of the terror-struck Harston; and rushed off, as fast as a Hansom could carry him, in search of Brodie or Copland. Neither was to be found. With a third, a surgeon of scarcely inferior eminence, he was more fortunate. Accompanied by an assistant bearing his fearful accessories, they reached the Euston Square Station five minutes before the appointed time. But there, to the grief and horror of William Mordaunt, the first person he saw was Lady Hargreave, supported by her servants. He had not so much as adjured her not to think of accompanying him; because at the moment of leaving her, she was nearly unconscious.

"My lady *would* come, Mr. Mordaunt," was Harston's explanation. "It was morally impossible to prevent her."

Hastily excusing himself to the surgeon, for leaving him to find his own way, he placed the poor fainting woman with Harston in the carriage retained for their use; and prepared himself to support her during the hours of suspense awaiting her. But *how* support her? — She had already ascertained at the Electric Telegraph Office, that news had reached them of the death of one of the sufferers by the recent collision.

“It was *not* Sir Richard Hargreave, the Member of Parliament, *that* they knew. But they could say nothing about the child that accompanied him.” To them, the child was only a child. To Margaret it was her beautiful boy: her own — her only! No wonder the words shaped themselves on her lips, or at least the thought in her heart —

Sinful Macduff! They were all slain for thee!

She was too faint to confide her forebodings, even to her brother. The railway whistle sounded. They started. They were on their rapid way; yet to Margaret's distracted mind, each hour that conveyed them over scores and scores of miles constituted a weary lagging day. Though she *looked* stricken into stone, every fibre of her frame was astir. The whole story of her past life seemed unfolded before her like a scroll: — her early trials; — her heart's hardening; — her heart's softening; — her too transitory love for that

faultless being of whom she had proved unworthy; the coming of the first born; the noble boy, the loving lovely child whom she was about to find crushed and tortured — perhaps gone for ever — perhaps unable to bestow one parting kiss upon his heartbroken mother. She remembered her husband's reluctance to depart. She remembered urging them to go. She remembered *why* she had urged them to go. And then "upstarting in her agony," prayed aloud for pardon; — prayed aloud that she might be permitted to die with them — with them, whom she had murdered.

Oh! hours of agony! — Yet such *have* been, and will be again and again endured, — in this age of speculation, when, as we have before asserted, the unforeseen predominates, and the hazardous is recklessly undertaken. The days we live in have indeed verified the lesson that, "in the midst of life, we are in death!" —

At length, after how many inquiries, after how many disappointments, the train paused suddenly: not within the railings of a station; but in the open fields. A signal had been given. They could proceed no further. The line, a little lower down was encumbered by fragments of broken carriages; part of which were embedded in the declivity of the embankment. They were to walk the last quarter of a mile. They must reach the — Station on foot.

"Don't wait for me. The servants will take care

of me. I will follow you as I can;" said Margaret, bravely. "Hurry on, hurry on, with the surgeon. — There is life and death in every moment." —

Mordaunt saw the wisdom of her injunction, and obeyed. Stumbling on among fragments of broken carriages, and the contents of a demolished luggage-van — for it was now dusk — he and his companion with some difficulty reached the station; where a regiment of stiff stern policemen was drawn up, who, had they been on the spot a few hours earlier, and mindful of their duty, have prevented this hideous waste of life.

Mordaunt and his companion were escorted, by men bearing lanterns, to a small inn, about fifty yards from the station; apparently constructed in express anticipation of casualties; to which the first class passengers, *dead* and *dying*, had been removed.

The surgeon now assumed his post of superiority, and professional answers awaited his professional inquiries.

Sir Richard was still alive. He was suffering from compound fracture of the thigh, and extensive spinal injury. It was unlikely that he would survive through the night.

The boy! Neither Mordaunt nor the surgeons thought, at that moment, of the boy. The mother was not yet arrived. There was nobody to inquire about the boy.

When she *was* lifted into the crowded hall, *that* was Margaret's first question. William and the London surgeon had been conducted, by the local directors in attendance, into the room where lay the mangled suffering form of what was once Dick Hargreave. She asked for the little boy, and was taken into an adjoining dressing-room; where, on a sofa, neglected, forsaken, forgotten, lay a patient little fellow — his head tied up in blood-streaked bandages — whose first faint murmur was, — "Dear mother! thank you — thank you for coming. — How is my poor papa?"

How instantaneously a mother's heart understood the art of assuaging his sufferings! She raised his throbbing head — she administered drink to his parched lips; but, alas! one glance at the little sufferer confirmed the intelligence vouchsafed by the station-master to her inquiries. "The doctors had hopes of preserving the sight of one eye; but the unfortunate young gentleman would, they feared, be maimed and disfigured." —

The room in which they were abutted, on the chamber where Sir Richard was lying; and the house being slightly run up, like most railway hotels, scarcely a word passed in one that was not audible in the other. The door of the little dressing-room, indeed, opened into the passage common to both; and she knew, for she had seen them pass, that the surgeons were there, — that amputation was impending; and,

for the next half hour, scarcely dared unclose her ears to the moans and endearing words of her little boy, lest some sudden shriek or cry; wrung by torment out of the heart of him who was undergoing this frightful operation, should reach her, and drive her to desperation.

She heard stifled exclamations of pain; but the voice was that of her brother, — of William, — who stood by the bedside of his suffering friend, scarcely able to bear the sight of the sufferings which he sustained with such manly courage. "My God! my God! have pity on them!" was her murmured prayer. For herself, she did not presume to appeal to Divine mercy.

At length, she saw the assistants, bearing their case of instruments, hasten along the passage. "By Jove, what pluck!" — was the ejaculation of the younger of the two, indignantly hushed by his companion. Their superior — the great operator — was closely following them; his countenance grave as death, but with the cold moisture of intense emotion still standing on his brow. He passed, solemn and silent; and, for a moment, all was still.

Oh! Margaret! scarcely still. — The beatings of thy poor wounded heart were so distinctly audible!

Whisperings too were soon heard in the ante-room. The attendance of the clergyman, authorised by the departing surgeons, was announced. A still-footed

and venerable stranger was piloted through the passage. "I must leave you now, dear, for a moment," whispered Margaret to her boy, in a voice he could hardly recognise as hers; and quietly disengaging her hand from his clinging, moist fingers, she stole out and silently followed the stranger into the presence of her husband. He was bearing thither the elements of the last rites of his faith, demanded by the dying man; and while he administered them, and in a mild but earnest voice recited the promises of salvation, she knelt near the door, humbly, unobserved, without daring so much as to raise her eyes towards the bed of death. When, towards the close, a faint voice gasped the response which certified the faith — the hope — the peace of mind of him whose life was returning into the hands of Him who gave it, she ventured one furtive glance towards the pillow. She saw her husband's pale, subdued face, bedewed with the damps of death. She saw William, more dead than alive, supporting his head. She saw no more. She fell forward on her knees upon the floor.

When she recovered to the consciousness of life, she was stretched upon the foot of the bed; with all present administering aid to *her* instead of to the sufferer whose moments were numbered. She signed to them to desist — to attend to *him*. — She raised herself with difficulty on her elbow, to obtain a glimpse of his face. —

"My Margaret!" said he; "my own Margaret! I thank you darling for being here. If I could have formed a wish in this world, it would have been to see your face again. Dear wife, you have made my days happy. Be equally kind to our poor children. I have appointed you their sole guardian; and you must live, my Margaret, live to fulfil that mighty charge. You will have good advisers, — our brothers William and Ralph. — Where is Ralph? — Shan't I see my poor Ralph again? — No — I am nearly spent. — Farewell, Margaret. — Kiss me, wife! — My thanks — my —"

A horrible spasm convulsed the face lighted up almost into beauty by the inspirations of devotion and love.

Chloroform was administered, which, if it could accomplish nothing towards prolonging that valuable life, might at least assuage the torments of the parting hour.

Again and again, was it administered. At length, the surgeons in attendance unlocked from that of Sir Richard the grasping hand of his wife; then, bending over the dead, closed his eyes for ever. —

Mordaunt, when requested to remove his sister from the room, was scarcely able to support *himself*. He returned two hours afterwards, when Margaret was stifling her sobs in the pillow of her sleeping boy; and throwing himself on his knees beside the bed

of death, kissed that cold forehead which not even the spasms of a death of anguish could render otherwise than manly, humane, and noble.

"I am very grieved for thee, my brother Jonathan," — was the feeling beating in his heart. But he spoke no word. It was too great, too overwhelming a sorrow for utterance.

CONCLUSION.

We dream not of Love's might,
Till Death hath rob'd with soft and solemn light,
The image we enshrine. Before that hour
We have but glimpses of the o'ermastering power,
Within us laid.

LONDON.

WITHIN an hour after that terrible consummation, a host of afflicted friends crowded to the spot; — among them, Ralph Hargreave, whose silent sorrow was powerful in proportion to his ardent nature; — Lord Delavile, who had hurried from London the moment the accident was known: — and poor Elinor Royd, accusing herself as the origin of all but eager to remove Lady Hargreave and the boy to her quiet home, ten miles distant from the fatal spot.

But Margaret's home was with the dead: — the dead whom she had injured the dead who had so loved her, and so forgiven! — She did not coldly reject the services of her husband's friend. She allowed poor Elinor to come and establish herself under that sacred roof, to share her vigils, and watch over the suffering boy; to whom, at intervals, she was herself unable to afford efficient attendance.

At length, the work of death was fully done: the tediously prolonged inquest — proving negligence, yet acquitting the negligent, and advising better care for the future, — regardless of the levity which had destroyed, among several lives, one whose loss was irreparable. By the deep gloom with which intelligence of the mournful event occurred, overspread the faces of friends, colleagues, county neighbours, political associates, — it was powerfully demonstrated how true and honest a heart had ceased to beat.

The faithful Elinor undertook the care of poor little Willy, who, though out of danger, was not in a state to admit of removal; while Lady Hargreave, with her brother and Ralph, accompanied to Dursley all that remained of its lamented master. Margaret bore up with the stony stillness of despair throughout the trying journey. But as they entered the lodge gates, her hand involuntarily sought the hand of her brother.

At that moment, the favourite old dun mare, which, as the first ridden by his beloved Margaret at Dursley, had been turned out by her husband to end its days peacefully in the park, came neighing towards the road; and though half-blind with age, started on seeing the hearse, as animals instinctively do, at the approach of some unwonted object. As she stood there,

startled and trembling, her rough mane streaming on the rushing wind that moaned through the leafless avenues, a world of associations burst upon the brain of Lady Hargreave. She scarcely retained the use of her reason when, the solemn procession having reached the portico, the distracted woman was borne, wildly shrieking, into the house.

Since the occurrence of this lamentable event, a subject of general lamentation both in public and private life, more than two years have elapsed. But from the day of the funeral, Dursley Park has been shut up, and deserted. The family-mansion, still incomplete, rears its vast structure of white free-stone, amidst the beautiful woods adjoining Homerton, like a colossal grave-stone to the memory of the dead. But the town of R— is indignant, and scarcely less so Sir Hurst and Lady Clitheroe, that Margaret and the executors of her husband's will, have declined to finish Dursley according to the original plan, and convert it into a show-house for the idlers of the cathedral town; unless the ill-fated little Sir William Hargreave, who still survives, — deformed, disfigured and delicate, —

should live to attain his majority, and desire to establish himself at the family seat.

At present, he resides with his mother and sister at Bardsel Tower, which was settled as a dower-house upon Lady Hargreave at her marriage; though rarely visited by her after the death of Aunt Martha, till it received her, a broken-hearted widow, under its sheltering roof. During the first twelve months of her afflicted state, the physician in constant attendance upon the disabled boy, entertained serious apprehensions concerning the fate of his mother. They feared both for her reason and her life. But as the sufferings of the son became alleviated, the health of Lady Hargreave gradually improved; and the affectionate care of her kind and judicious neighbours at Hargreen, as well as the unceasing attendance of her attached brother, have done much towards her restoration. For some time past, though her widow's weeds and depressed air still continue to render more apparent the hollowness of her mournful eyes, and the slowness of her wasted figure, a trace sometimes appears of the beautiful Margaret of other days.

On the day when the second year of her widowhood was accomplished, William Mordaunt now a prematurely grey-headed man, was forced, though reluctantly, to tender to her acceptance the proposals of

Lord Fitzmorton; who, it appeared, had long entertained for her a preference which his good sense had enabled him to repress in due season. But the death of his mother, and establishment of his sister Lady Emily Fanshawe in Italy, had now rendered Morton Castle a less cheerful sojourn than of old; and fortunate indeed would he have felt himself could the object of his attachment and admiration have been tempted to renounce her melancholy seclusion, and accept his coronet and hand.

But at the mere mention of his name, Lady Hargrave shuddered, as though the cold breath of the grave had chilled her heart.

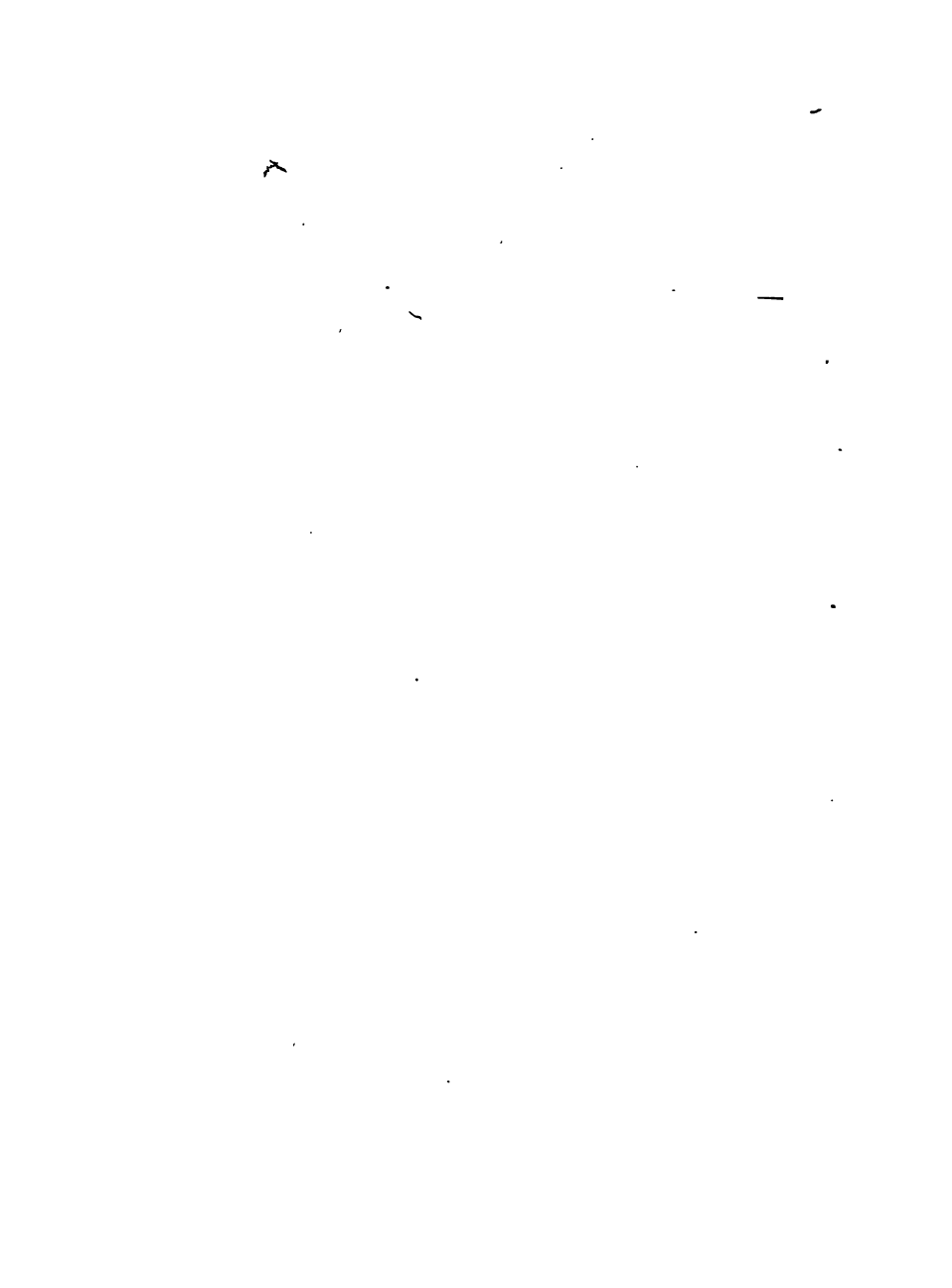
"Tell him, dear brother," she replied, "that I am grateful for his remembrance, and wish him a good and faithful wife. In *me*, he would marry one whose affections are in the grave, and whose every thought and wish are anchored *there!*" she continued, in a lower voice, pointing to the garden-chair, in which her loving, gentle, uncomplaining, sickly son was daily wheeled round the lawn, escorted by his kind sister. "My pride is humbled to the dust, William; but while it pleases God to spare me, I will fulfil my duties, and patiently endeavour to work out my atonement. Bring me, however, no more such messages; which would become the lips of my brother Mildenhall, far better than your own. — Respect the memory of the friend

we have lost. — My children shall never know in me other than their father's widow. You, alone, dearest and best of brothers, may feel better disposed to cling to your poor Margaret under the name of the Dean's Daughter."

THE END.

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